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CHANGING INNER MONGOLIA
Pastoral Mongolian Society and the Chinese State

David Sneath

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PREFACE

My intention in writing this book was to provide an account of the pastoral Mongolians of Inner Mongolia since they became the subjects of the Chinese communist state. Necessarily, any such narrative can be only fragmentary—a building together of selected comments from some of those who were subject to these changes, from written sources, and from my own impressions, in an attempt to provide a general overview of how a way of life has been transformed. Such a narrative can, of course, be only a personal one, but it is an attempt to answer the question, 'How did the state shape the lives of Mongolians in the region, both as individuals and as subjects of its own political discourse—a minority nationality in an autonomous region, an ethnic group represented as a pastoral people?'

Inner Mongolia is a huge sickle-shaped region five times the size of Britain, and it forms the eastern half of China's northern border. The region has experienced a huge influx of Han Chinese who dominate the urban and agricultural areas, but much of the steppe, with its vast expanses of grassland, remains Mongolian: it is the indigenous pastoralists that this study is centred upon. A single book could not comprehensively describe such a vast subject, and so this work is restricted to two main tasks. First, to provide a general overview of the recent history of the region, concentrating upon the story of the pastoral Mongolians, rather than the Han Chinese or agricultural Mongolians. At first the position of Mongolians in China was linked to the career of Ulanhu the communist political strongman and architect of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region (IMAR). The distinctiveness of the Mongolian pastoral economy and culture had allowed Ulanhu to argue that policies had to be tailored to the nationality's special needs by a Mongolian-led administration. The Mongolians paid a terrible price for this special status during the Cultural Revolution, however, when Ulanhu and his faction fell from power amid accusations of separatism and Mongolian nationalism. With the fall of the Gang of Four and the post-Maoist reforms, however, Ulanhu's faction (and family) returned to power and revived official patronage of certain elements of Mongolian culture.

The other aim of the book is to analyse the consequences of decollectivization for Inner Mongolian pastoralists. In the 1980s China underwent an unprecedented change in state policy, and a new economic system has developed. Property has been returned to private use, and the People's Communes dismantled. Market forces to a limited extent at least have begun to operate. Since the end of the Cultural Revolution a comparable change has occurred in government policy regarding minority nationalities. It should be added, however, that although the post-Maoist leadership did favour selected

aspects of minority cultures, such tolerance has strict limits. As in Xinjiang and Tibet, events have demonstrated that the Chinese state is determined to suppress any activities it associates with separatist minority nationalism.

The Mongolians of China have been doubly affected by the policies of the Chinese state. First, many of them undertake a characteristic mode of production—pastoralism—so that the transformations in the economic organization of this sector have had distinctive effects upon Mongolian society. Second, the variations in state policy towards the Mongolian nationality have caused marked changes in their cultural and religious life. The study of the results of decollectivization required an investigation of the pastoral economy in a broad sense to try and ascertain how formal economic policy was being applied and implemented in the region. But it was just as important to gain a picture of how Mongolian families and communities operated the economy at the small-scale level and the concurrent social and cultural patterns the change has brought. Changes in patterns of consumption were of particular interest.

The analysis of the decollectivization of a pastoral economy raised a number of theoretical questions regarding the nature of social change and Marxist ideology. The Chinese communist administration has attempted to mould Mongolian society over the last forty years. It considered the reorganization of productive relations to be the key to engineering social change. After collectivization had been reversed there was a unique opportunity to observe the lasting results of these efforts. Of particular interest was the way in which elements of pre-revolutionary Mongolian culture appeared to have influenced the development of the pastoral economy.

The process of decollectivization saw the apparently equal distribution of livestock between herding households quickly lead to material inequality between them. It is also apparent that social relations reflect underlying notions of domestic organization and paternalistic authority (expressed in modes of symbolism and domestic space) that have remained fundamental to pastoralism in Inner Mongolia. I also argue that the history of pastoralism in the region suggests an indigenous mechanism for economic inequality and dependency in pastoral society. Furthermore, it seems that in the past this dependency helped form the basis for a hierarchical sociopolitical order that can be described as 'feudal' in the Weberian sense of the term.

I first travelled to Inner Mongolia in 1986, spending the summer there, and then returned for more than a year in 1987–8 when much of the fieldwork for this book was carried out. At that time I was based at the Inner Mongolia Teachers' University in Hohhot doing research and some teaching, and chose study areas in Shilingol and Hulun Buir because in these two regions around 90 per cent of the pastoral population were Mongolian. I travelled to Hulun Buir to do fieldwork in winter and summer, and to Shilingol in spring and early autumn. After being introduced to pastoral families by helpful colleagues and friends at the University I generally worked alone, usually staying with a household for two or three weeks before moving on. This had a number of advantages, in that I had no choice but to attempt to fit in as well as I could with the busy working day of a Mongolian household, watering and herding animals as best I could. Although I was of limited help to my hosts, almost all of them were patient with a slow learner. I attempted to recompense the household for the trouble I put them to by doing whatever tasks I was given as well as I could manage, and by bringing useful goods from the *sum* (district) centre whenever I went there: cloth, alcohol, tobacco, and as much food and as many sweets as I could manage. I did not generally select families to inflict my company upon, but was usually invited by one of the friends or relatives of the household I was staying with at the time. I visited Inner Mongolia again in 1991 and have remained in touch with a number of Inner Mongolian friends (some of whom I have been able to work with in Britain). I remain indebted to all those who have helped me since my first visit to that fascinating region.

As a good deal of what I was told during fieldwork was in confidence, and might be considered politically sensitive, I have changed the names of all the informants and their relatives mentioned in this book, and I have invented the names of the *sum* (districts) in which they live, although not those of the larger *hoshuu* (banner) districts in which they were found. All the other places and names are, as far as I know, correct.

The Transliteration of Mongolian Terms

In the case of relatively well-known Mongolian names and words I have used the spelling that is most widely accepted in the English literature, even when this is actually a poor transliteration of the Mongolian word. The most notable examples are listed below:

1. The term 'khan' is written as it usually is in English (not *haan* or *qagan*).
2. The name of the Inner Mongolian political leader is written as 'Ulanhu' as it is found in most publications, rather than 'Ulaanhüü', and that of his son is written 'Buhe' rather than 'Böh'.
3. The term for a ritual cairn is written *oboo* (not *ovoo*, *obo*, or *obug-a*)
4. The names of well-known places and districts in Inner Mongolia are written in the most common and consistent English form of their Mongolian names (e.g. Hohhot).

It is difficult to settle on an appropriate convention for the transliteration of other Mongolian terms, as there are a number of different schemes. In Inner Mongolia the classical script is still used as the official written form, but it is a poor guide to the modern pronunciation. The Cyrillic spelling system used in Mongolia is a better match with the spoken form, but it requires some modification to reflect received pronunciation in Inner Mongolia. For

this reason I have made three changes to the standard transliteration of the Cyrillic Mongolian alphabet so as to provide a reasonable approximation of the Inner Mongolian spoken form:

1. The letter Ц (normally represented by 'ts') is written 'ch'.
2. The letter З (normally transliterated as 'z') is written 'j'.
3. The letter в (normally transliterated as 'v' is written 'b', except in words where both Inner Mongolian pronunciation and the classical script use 'v'- -namely *nirvaan* (Nirvana) and *sanvaar* (religious vow).

It should also be noted that I transliterate the Cyrillic letter Х as 'h' and not as 'kh'. Where the modified Cyrillic form is noticeably different from the word as written in the classical Mongolian script, or where there might be some difficulty locating the word in a dictionary, I have also provided (in a footnote or brackets) a transliteration of the classical spelling the first time that the word appears. So that terms can be easily found in a widely used Mongolian–English dictionary I have used F. D. Lessing's system for the transliteration of the classical script but with the following conventions for ease of use:

sh replaces š
g replaces Γ.

Following Lessing, however, for classical transliterations.

c replaces č
o replaces ö
x replaces q
y replaces ü
z replaces j
ai replaces ayi
ei replaces eyi.

To avoid the multiplication of Mongolian terms in the text, unless otherwise specified the plural of a Mongolian word has been indicated by adding a Roman 's' to the end, rather than giving the Mongolian plural. Thus the plural of *taij* (prince, noble) is written as *taijs*, rather than the Mongolian *taijnar*. However, the terms *shabinar* (monastic subjects), Borjigid (members of Chinggis Khan's clan), and *noyad* (nobles) are plurals used so frequently in the text that I have left them in the Mongolian original.

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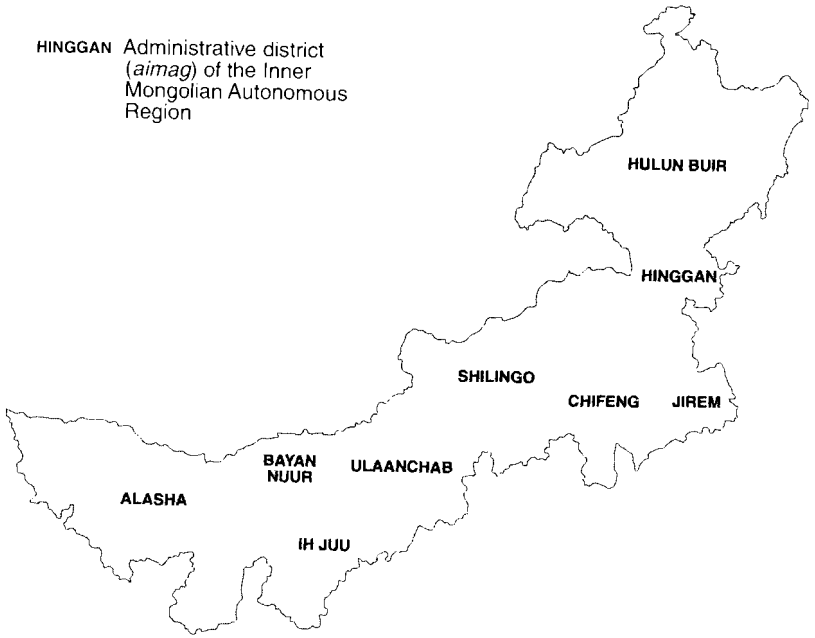


Map Inner Mongolian administrative districts

1

Introduction: Historical Background

More than half a century ago Owen Lattimore wrote that in the early twentieth century 'Throughout Inner Mongolia, the Chinese were encroaching and the Mongols being wiped out.'[1] His work described a unique phase in what Lattimore considered to be an ancient cycle of relations between the agricultural societies of China and those of the pastoralists to their north. He wrote 'The underlying problems of Inner Mongolia are social and economic, more than political, although antagonisms between China and the Mongols usually take political forms. The interests of the Mongols, for geographical and climatic reasons, are as predominantly pastoral as those of the Chinese are, or have been in the past, agricultural.'[2] Lattimore reached these conclusions in the 1930s, at a time when Inner Mongolia's future hung in the balance, caught between the Japanese, Chinese communist, and Guomindang (nationalist) forces. Since then Inner Mongolia has become part of the People's Republic of China, but there has been surprisingly little written in English about the pastoral Mongolians of this region under communist rule. This book is an attempt to redress the balance, to outline the upheavals that pastoral Mongolian communities in Inner Mongolia have faced since the advent of communist control of the region, and to describe the society to emerge from the decollectivization of the livestock economy in the 1980s.

The colonization of the region by Chinese settlers that Lattimore described has continued throughout much of the twentieth century. In 1912 there were a little over one million Han Chinese in Inner Mongolia.[3] By 1990 this number had risen to more than seventeen million. The Mongolians have certainly not been 'wiped out'; there were more than three million living in the region in 1990.[4] However, only a minority of this total are pastoralists, indeed large numbers of Mongolian agriculturalists have been an important element of Inner Mongolian society since at least the last century. This account is particularly concerned with the remaining pastoral Mongolians, and draws upon fieldwork carried out in two of the most purely pastoral parts of modern Inner Mongolia—Shilingol and Hulun Buir leagues. There were around half a million specialist pastoralists of working age in Inner Mongolia in 1989, and most

[1] Lattimore (1934: 27).
[2] Lattimore (1962*a*: 415).
[3] Ma (1993: 173).
[4] Little more than Lattimore's (1934: 25) estimate of three million Mongolians living in the territories of what is now the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region. Official Chinese government statistics, however, show a very low Mongolian population in 1947, just 832,000.

of these were Mongolian.[5] Indeed, despite the encroachment of agriculture, around 70 per cent of the territory of Inner Mongolia is still used for pastoralism.[6]

Geographically, most of both Inner and Outer Mongolia is high steppeland, bordered on the north-west by the Altai mountains (which have peaks as high as 4,000 metres), in the east by the Hinggan range of Inner Mongolia, and in the south by the Great Wall of China. Much of this rolling tableland is around 1,000 metres above sea level,[7] and provides vast open pastures for herds of livestock. Although there are areas that are well suited for cultivation, much of the region is quite dry, with an average rainfall of between 100 and 300 mm., and makes poor agricultural land. The political geography of the region has divided the bulk of the Mongolian population between three states, Russia, China, and Mongolia. Around 350,000 Buryat Mongolians live in the Russian Federation, mostly in the area around lake Baikal.[8] Almost all of the 2.4 million subjects of the independent nation of Mongolia are ethnic Mongolians, and in the People's Republic of China there are, officially, more than four million Mongolians, most of them living in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region.

An Imperial Heritage

In the early twelfth century the term 'Mongol' appears as the name of a minor steppe power governed by a ruler named Kabul Khan, although the word 'Mongol' itself may have originated from the name of an even earlier polity that existed as long ago as the Tang dynasty.[9] Kabul seems to have been the vassal of the Jurchen Jin dynasty that ruled Northern China, and his realm was only one of a number that existed in the steppelands of what is now Mongolia; others included that of the Tartars, Naiman, Merkid, and Kereid. Kabul rebelled against the Jin in the 1120s, winning territory and annual payments from them in 1147; however, his successor, Ambagai Khan, was less successful. The Tartars captured Ambagai and handed him over to the Jin for execution. The next Mongol khan, Kutula, had some military successes against the Jin, but was defeated by the Tartars some time around

[5] There were 248,000 pastoral workers in pastoral regions, 335,000 in semi-pastoral regions, according to the *Nei Menggu Tongji Nianjian* (1990: 175). The total population of pastoral areas of Inner Mongolia was given as 1.9 million in 1985, and most of these were probably Mongolian, as the Han tend to populate agricultural and urban areas. See Inner Mongolia Territorial Resources Compilation Committee (*Nei Menggu Guotu Ziyuan*) (1987: 566).

[6] National Research Council (1992: 17).

[7] Moses and Halkovic (1985: 11–12).

[8] The other area of Russia with a sizeable Mongolian population (around 150,000), is far to the west, in Kalmykia, by the Caspian Sea.

[9] Ratchnevsky (1991: 7–9).

1160. Kutula's realm (his *ulus*[10]) disintegrated into its constituent elements, ruled by feuding nobles who were compelled to pay tribute to the Jin emperor.[11]

Kabul Khan's grandson, Yesügei Baatar, was one of these minor Mongol lords and he enjoyed some limited military success against the Tartars. Yesügei became an ally of the khan of the nearby Kereid polity and helped restore the ruler to his throne after a rebellion. Yesügei arranged the marriage of his son Temujin to the daughter of a lord of another important steppe power, the Onggirad. When Yesügei died (poisoned by Tartars) his entourage dispersed and the nobles of the Tayich'ut lineage, who had been vassals of Yesügei Baatar, refused to follow his widow Hö'elun. Despite desertions, and Merkid attacks, Hö'elun managed to keep all but one of her children alive, and as her son Temujin grew up he was able to make good use of his father's old alliances. With the support of the Kereid khan, Temujin made war on the Merkid and became a powerful lord in his own right. In 1195 the Tartars rebelled against the Jin who dispatched an army against them in retaliation. The following year Temujin took advantage of the Tartar weakness to attack and defeat them. Over the next decade Temujin successfully waged war on the other steppe rulers (including his old patron, the Kereid khan) and conquered all their domains. At the great assembly of 1206 he was invested with the title Chinggis Khan, ruler of the entire Mongolian steppe.

Chinggis wasted no time in using his powerful army, attacking the neighbouring Tangut state of Xi-Xia, which ruled the areas of what is now Alasha, Ordos, Ningxia, and parts of Gansu.[12] By 1210 Chinggis had forced the Tangut to pay him tribute, and the Mongol khan's growing power and prestige brought him diplomatic victories; in 1211 the Turkic rulers of the Uighur and Karluk swore fealty to him. After these successes in the west Chinggis felt confident enough to settle old scores by attacking the Jin in the east. The khan's armies were victorious once again, and in 1215 the Mongols captured the Jin capital of Zhongdu (now Beijing). Over the next nineteen years they conquered and consolidated their rule of the entire Jin empire. In 1218 Chinggis Khan's dominions expanded further to the west as his generals took Kashgar and gained control of much of the Kara-Khitan empire that was centred on the Tarim Basin in what is now Xinjiang. This brought him into contact with the expanding empire of Sultan Muhammad of Khwarazm, whose dominions encompassed Persia, Afghanistan, and much of Central Asia. It seems that at first Chinggis attempted to establish peaceful relations with the Khwarazm-shah, but his overtures were rejected and his envoys

[10] This is the Mongolian term used for polities or domains. *Ulus* was later used for the appanages of nobles during the Imperial period, and the word has come to mean 'nation' in modern Mongolian.

[11] See Ratchnevsky (1991: 12, 281–2).

[12] See Rossabi (1988: 5) and Ratchnevsky (1991: 103).

killed.[13] In 1219 the Mongol armies swept into Khwarazm territory, and met with brilliant success. By 1221 the Sultan Muhammad was dead and his armies scattered.

Chinggis Khan died in 1227, ruler of a vast empire. In the process of conquest, he had assigned lands and their inhabitants to members of his family and following. The four sons of Börte, the khan's principal wife, had each been made the overlord of a part of the empire. The eldest, Jochi, was given the most distant areas to the west of the river Irtysch as his *ulus*.[14] Chagadai was assigned much of Turkestan and Transoxiana, and this domain (later known as the Chagadei Khanate) was subsequently ruled by his descendants. Ögödei was given lands on the river Ili (to the east of lake Balkhash). Tolui, the youngest son, inherited the homeland in Mongolia with the parental domains, following Mongol tradition. Chinggis chose Ögödei to succeed him as emperor of all the Mongol dominions, and during his reign (1229–41) the empire continued to expand rapidly. The remnants of the Jin empire were conquered, and Korea was subjugated. In 1234 the Sung empire of south China captured some former Jin territory, and in retaliation the Mongols declared war – beginning their advance south. Ögödei also ordered an army back into Persia in 1231, to consolidate and extend the conquest of the Khwaraznian empire, and by 1240 Georgia and Armenia had also been subjugated.[15]

Jochi, Chinggis Khan's eldest son, had died before his father, and his domains were divided between his eldest and youngest sons, Orda and Batu. Orda received the lands from the river Irtysh to the Aral Sea (which became the khanate known as the White Horde); but Batu was assigned the area west of the Volga – a potential rather than an actual domain. In 1235 Ögödei Khan agreed to provide the prince with the means to conquer a kingdom of his own, and assembled a powerful army under the command of Batu and the brilliant veteran general Sübodei, who had served Chinggis Khan. The next year an army of fifteen divisions rode west, towards Europe.[16] They conquered the Turkic kingdom of the Bulgars (whose capital was near modern-day Kazan), and defeated the pastoral Cumans or Kipchaks, many of whom fled west. In the winter of 1237 Mongol forces entered Russia and swept all before them – destroying towns and armies in their path. In a whirlwind campaign in 1241 Batu, Sübodei, and the other Mongol commanders swept through Poland and occupied Hungary, annihilating the European armies they encountered at Leignitz and Mohi.

[13] See Ratchnevsky (1991: 119–23).

[14] These domains or appanages were also termed *ulus*.

[15] Saunders (1971: 79–80).

[16] The Mongol military unit of 10,000 horsemen (*toumen*) can be termed a 'division'. It was composed of 10 units of 1,000 each. Batu's army had 15 *toumen* and therefore had a nominal strength of around 150,000 horsemen.

To the terrified kingdoms of Europe it seemed as if nothing could stop the Mongol advance, but in 1242 the khan's armies suddenly withdrew to Russia.[17] Batu had abandoned Hungary because he had received the news that Ögödei Khan had died in the Mongol capital of Karakorum. The Mongol commanders moved their armies back east to influence the expected struggle over the succession to the throne of the empire. After much political manœuvring, Ögödei's son Güyük was finally enthroned as emperor in 1246, and Batu settled down to rule his domain. Centred on the steppes of southern Russia, Batu's realm included the whole of Russia and extended as far as Bulgaria in the west and the Caucasus in the south. His khanate became known as the Golden Horde,[18] and Batu's successors ruled Russia for the next century and a half before their power was broken by Timur Lenke.

Güyük ruled the vast Mongol empire for only two years; when he died in 1248 his widow, Oghul-Ghaimish, ruled as regent for three years until Tolui's son, Möngke, became emperor. Möngke Khan secured his position by executing most of the leading members of the house of Ögödei, including Oghul-Ghaimish. He then sent his younger brother Hülegü south-west with an army, to extend the empire in the Middle East. In 1258 Hülegü sacked the great Islamic metropolis of Baghdad and executed the caliph. The following year his forces invaded Syria and in 1260 occupied Damascus. Again, the Mongol advance was halted by the death of the emperor. Möngke died in 1259 and this time the struggle for succession became an armed conflict between two of his other younger brothers; Arigh-böke, based in the Mongolian homeland, and Khubilai, commanding the Mongol forces in northern China.

Hülegü moved his army east to Azerbaijan in case he was drawn into the struggle between Arigh-böke and Khubilai, leaving only a small force in Syria. The Mamluk sultan of Egypt, Kutuz, seized the opportunity to attack the Mongol detachment, and mobilized a large army. In 1260 the two forces met at Ain Jalut, near Nazareth, and the Mongols suffered their first significant military defeat since Chinggis Khan had begun his conquest of China. This marked the high tide of Mongol expansion in the Middle East. Hülegü became the first of the Il-khans, the Mongol dynasty that ruled Persia and adjacent regions until the last of his line died heirless in 1335.

Khubilai Khan, although the undisputed emperor of the Mongol world, did not inherit a unified empire. He was, in effect, the senior member and nominal overlord of a royal family that ruled relatively independent khanates in Russia, Persia, Turkestan, and northern China. War had already broken out between Hülegü and Berke Khan, who had succeeded his brother Batu

[17] For a more detailed account of European reactions to the Mongol advance see Chambers (1979).

[18] The term 'horde' is derived from the Turko-Mongol word *ordu*, meaning the camp or court. Batu Khan's polity was also known as the Kipchak khanate.

as khan of the Golden Horde.[19] Khubilai had his own power-base in northern China (although he also ruled Mongolia after the surrender of his brother Arigh-böke in 1264). His capital was the old Jin seat of government of Zhongdu (now Beijing)[20] known by the Turks as Khan-balik—'the khan's city'. Khubilai pursued the war against the Sung dynasty, and in 1276 he took their capital, reunifying China for the first time since the fall of the Tang. Khubilai's armies pushed on as far south as Java, but in 1281 the huge armada that the khan sent to conquer Japan was destroyed by a violent summer typhoon, and the Mongols never attempted to invade the island again. Khubilai enhanced his legitimacy by forming an alliance with the Tibetan Buddhist leader Lodoijaltsan—the Pagspa Lama, who identified Khubilai with figures in the Buddhist pantheon in return for the emperor's support for the religion. Khubilai died in 1294, but the Yüan dynasty that he founded continued to rule China until a series of rebellions in the middle of the next century led to their overthrow by the Ming in 1368. Togon Temur, the last Yüan emperor of China, retreated to Mongolia, and the dynasty continued to rule parts of Mongolia under the name of the Northern Yüan.

The Chagadai khanate was beset by internal power struggles in the fourteenth century. In 1370 power was seized by a military leader named Timur Lenke who claimed descent from Chinggis Khan. Timur 'the Lame' (Tamberlane) was a devout Muslim and his background was more Turkic than Mongol. He went on to conquer an empire that stretched from Samarkand to Turkey, but this vast kingdom fragmented on his death in 1405. By the fifteenth century the age of Mongol conquest was over. In Mongolia itself the once-great capital of Karakorum was sacked in 1388 by the armies of the Chinese Ming dynasty.[21]

The extraordinary military successes of the Mongols were based upon the use of the horse, the bow, and the unparalleled mobility that their armies managed to achieve. Generally outnumbered by their opponents, the Mongolian cavalry were brilliantly commanded and disciplined. The horses, hardiness, and mobility that were some of the ingredients of Mongol success were undoubtedly the result of their mobile pastoral lifestyle. The Mamlukes, however, managed successfully to adopt the mobile cavalry tactics of the Mongols (indeed these warrior slaves were originally recruited from many of the Turkic pastoralists who were defeated by the Mongols but had a similar lifestyle). In the fourteenth century, when the Mongol rulers of the different sections of the vast empire began to struggle against each other, their relative military superiority over neighbouring states declined. In governing the vast dominions that they had won, the Mongol rulers adopted many of the

[19] Saunders (1971: 156).

[20] Rossabi (1988: 131), notes that in 1266 Khubilai began construction of a new capital slightly to the north-east of the Jin dynastic capital.

[21] Brent (1976: 219).

methods, and sometimes the religion, of the dynasties they replaced; so that after the initial shock of conquest the influence of Mongol culture on the subject states was relatively limited.

In the fifteenth century the Chinggisid nobles quarrelled among themselves and a new power emerged on the steppe; the Oirad Mongols, whose rulers were not recognized descendants of Chinggis Khan. Based in the western part of Mongolia the Oirad extended their power eastwards, at the expense of the Chinggisids, and captured Karakorum. The fortunes of the old imperial house revived briefly after 1480 when Batmönh Dayan Khan assumed the throne of the Northern Yüan and managed to reunite most of the Chinggisid nobility under his leadership.[22] After Dayan Khan's death his grandson succeeded him on the imperial throne; however, the empire was, in effect, divided between Dayan's nine sons who acted as overlords of its constituent elements. These quickly became more or less independent princedoms with their own names, whose rulers also began to adopt the title of 'khan'. In the sixteenth century one of these—Altan Khan of the Tümed Mongols (1507–82)—revived something of the glory of the Chinggisid line.[23] He successfully raided China, defeated the Oirad, and recaptured Karakorum.

Altan revived the alliance with Tibetan Buddhism that Khubilai Khan had forged; in 1578 he met with Sodnamjamsu, the senior lama of the Ge-luk-pa 'Yellow sect', and conferred upon him the title 'Dalai Lama'.[24] In return the Dalai Lama promoted Altan's reputation by declaring him to be the reincarnation of Khubilai Khan. The khan supported the Ge-luk-pa against their rivals (the Sa-gya-pa, 'Red Sect'), and vigorously promoted Buddhism in Mongolia, eliminating symbols of the old pagan religion (such as the *onggod*—small felt figures of ancestors) and persecuting the shamans who refused to accept the new faith. In 1580 Altan established a Buddhist monastery in his capital Hühhot (Hohhot) which he had built with Chinese labour.[25] Other Mongol monarchs, such as Abdai Khan of the Halh who ruled much of central Mongolia, followed Altan Khan's example and converted to Buddhism.

The links between the Buddhist religious establishment and the Mongol nobility remained very close. When the Dalai Lama died in 1588, one of Altan Khan's relatives was found to be his next reincarnation. In 1650 one of Abdai's descendants, the 15-year-old son of the Tushetu khan Gombodorji,

[22] Editorial Group of 'The Brief History of the Mongolian Nationality' (EGBHMN) (1985: 145–6).

[23] Ibid. 153.

[24] The title might be translated as 'Oceanic Lama' from the Mongolian word for ocean, *dalai*. Sodnamjamsu was the 'third' Dalai Lama, as the title was retrospectively applied to the two previous incarnations of the *bodhisattva*. The explicit references to the old alliance between Khubilai and the Pagspa lama is noted by Bawden (1968: 29).

[25] EGBHMN (1985: 505).

was invested with the title of Jebtsundamba Hutagt,[26] the 'Living Buddha' whose subsequent seven reincarnations (most of whom were found in Tibet) headed Buddhism in Outer Mongolia until the twentieth century.[27]

When Ligdan Khan, the last emperor of the beleaguered Northern Yüan, inherited the throne in 1604, the imperial house faced the growing power of the Manchus in the east as well as the old threat of the Oirad in the west. In reality Ligdan could only directly rule his own appanage of Chahar in the south-east of Mongolia, but he made vigorous and largely unsuccessful attempts to forcibly unite and control the other Chinggisid nobles. Ligdan became so unpopular among these petty rulers that some, such as the lords of the Horchin and Harchin Mongols, preferred to swear fealty to Nurhachi, the khan of the Manchus. In 1632 the Manchus and their allies routed Ligdan Khan who died in exile two years later, and in 1635 his son submitted to the Manchu khan Abahai (son of Nurhachi), and was rewarded with a diplomatic marriage to Abahai's daughter. By 1636, when Abahai proclaimed himself emperor and adopted the dynastic name Qing, his vassals included most of the rulers of what became Inner Mongolia, some of whom where related to him by his marriage to a Horchin princess.[28]

In 1644, under the pressure of Manchu attacks and internal rebellions, the Ming dynasty finally collapsed and the Qing began rapidly to take control of China. To the north-east of the Gobi Desert the three khans of the Halha Mongols faced military defeat at the hands of Galdan Khan of the Oirad. They turned to the Manchus for support, swearing fealty to the Qing emperor in 1691. Five years later Galdan was defeated by the Manchus and their Mongolian allies. Over the next sixty years the Qing armies destroyed the power of the western Mongols and returned the lands of Mongolia to nobles of Chinggis Khan's Borjigin lineage (referred to collectively by the plural term Borjigid). The Mongolian aristocracy enjoyed a high status under the Qing, particularly in the area of military appointments, and the Mongol and Manchu nobility frequently intermarried. In the next two centuries the Borjigid remained generally loyal to the Qing, the few rebellions against their rule were usually limited and easily put down. With the continued support of the authorities Buddhism expanded steadily, temples and monasteries were established and began to amass herds, lands, and serfs that were bequeathed by devout nobles. Over this period Mongolia became increasingly integrated, economically and politically, with the rest of the Manchu empire. By the twentieth century this had had a ruinous effect on Mongolian prosperity; much of the population (both noble and commoner) was in debt to Chinese firms of merchants, taxes were heavy, and in some regions pastoral families

[26] The title of *Hutagt* (written *xutugtu* in classical Mongolian) is used for the reincarnations of particularly holy lamas. These individuals are discovered as young boys after the death of the previous office holders, and are said to remember their previous incarnations.

[27] Bawden (1968: 33). [28] Ibid. 46.

were being turned off the pasture lands which the local lords were selling to Chinese settlers.

The Division of a Nation

The division between Inner and Outer Mongolia was an administrative distinction formally introduced by the Qing dynasty, although its origins may have been older.[29] Inner Mongolia was the term given to regions close enough to the seat of government to be administered directly by the *Li-fan-yuan*, the Court of Dependencies in Beijing,[30] whilst the more distant Outer Mongolia was ruled indirectly, via the military governors of Urga, Uliasutai, and Khobdo (Hovd). Inner Mongolia was divided into six large administrative units known as *chuulgan* (usually translated as 'leagues'[31]), each made up of a number of divisions called *aimags*. Outer Mongolia, however, was divided into four huge *aimags*, although they were also administered as leagues.[32] In both cases the *aimags* were subdivided into a number of *hoshuu* (usually translated as 'banners') which were medium-sized administrative units, usually ruled by a hereditary prince (*jasag noyan*). In most cases these princes formed a council for the administration of their league, under the supervision of Manchu officials. The *hoshuu* was usually subdivided into a number of smaller districts called *sum*.[33] In Inner Mongolia the six leagues were composed of forty-nine banners and in addition to these there were a number of Inner Mongolian groups that were not part of the league administrations, such as the eight banners of Chahar, as well as those of the Tümed and Barga Mongols.[34]

Despite the enormous changes that the region has experienced in the twentieth century, and although there have been many boundary changes, the basic administrative division of Inner Mongolia into banners has remained in use until the present day.[35] In the 1950s the Chinese government abolished

[29] Chang (1933: 58) traces the roots of this division to the earlier disintegration of the Mongolian khanate of Dayan Khan in the fifteenth century.

[30] Brown and Onon (1976) refer to the *Li-fan-yuan* as the 'Court of Dependencies'. Bawden uses the term 'Colonial Ministry' and Chang the 'Colonial Office'. Strictly speaking this was not a ministry, but an agency of even higher standing. Hucker (1985: 304) terms it the 'Court of Colonial Affairs'.

[31] This is a translation not of the Mongolian term but of the Chinese word *meng*, which means an assembly.

[32] From 1728 the four *aimags* of Outer Mongolia were redesignated leagues for administrative purposes, although still known as *aimags*. See Bawden (1968: 107).

[33] In the rest of Mongolia subdivisions of the *sum* were known as as *bag*, or in ecclesiastical districts *otog*. See Natsagdorj (1967: 209).

[34] The Barga, for example, were administered by a Manchu official (*amban*). The Chahar, Tumed, and Harachin were ruled by appointed officials rather than Borjigid princes because they had rebelled against the Qing in the past.

[35] Although the league administration was dismantled under the Chinese Guomindang government, starting around 1914, the Chinese term 'league' (*meng*) was reinstated by the Communist administration for the largest administrative units of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, although the Mongolian term for these units was *aimag* rather than *chuulgan*.

the *sum* and introduced the People's Communes as the units of local government within the banner. However, since the mid-1980s the communes have been disbanded and the *sum* reinstated as a unit of local government.

Mongolia from 1911 to 1945

Chinese economic dominance of Outer and Inner Mongolia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was widely unpopular, as an impoverished population struggled to pay their tax arrears and the interest owed on debts to Chinese merchants. Whilst in the end it was often the commoners who had to pay for both their own debts and those of their lord, many of the nobles were themselves deeply in debt, and the prospect of escaping these financial obligations became increasingly attractive. The Sain Noyan Khan, for instance, who led the Outer Mongolian independence movement, himself owed large sums to Chinese merchants.[36]

As the power of the Qing weakened, a Mongolian independence movement emerged, drawing upon the political and financial interests of the élite and the popular anti-Chinese sentiment among the commoners. This antipathy had been demonstrated by various riots in Urga in the early twentieth century, in which mobs of Mongols had smashed Chinese shops and offices. The increasing disintegration of the Qing in China loosened what control the Manchu government had upon distant dominions such as Outer Mongolia. In this climate the final downfall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911 allowed the nobles leading the independence movement to gain the support of the revered head of the powerful Buddhist establishment, the Jebtsundamba Hutagt. The princes proclaimed the Hutagt the Holy Khan (Bogd Khan) of Mongolia, and set up five ministries to assist him in ruling. The new government simply declared itself independent, and the internal political turmoil of China precluded any effective opposition from Beijing.

The nobles who ruled the newly independent Outer Mongolia lost no time in appealing to the Russian government in the hope of aid. Indeed it was logical that the new state should turn to its western neighbour. The Mongolian economy was still almost entirely based on livestock production, and Russian traders had begun to supply the Mongolians with the industrial and agricultural products they needed. Up to that time the Russians had not gained the reputation for commercial exploitation that their Chinese rivals had.

The Russians recognized the new state in 1912, and signed an agreement with Outer Mongolia that increased Russian interests and economic activities in the country at the expense of the Chinese, who were increasingly excluded. The agreement also promised Russian assistance in the event of Chinese invasion. That same year, 1912, the Russians signed a secret treaty with the

[36] Rossabi (1975: 237).

Japanese that divided Mongolia into two spheres of influence; Outer Mongolia was allocated to the Russians, whilst Inner Mongolia was considered to be part of the Japanese sphere.[37] As a result of this secret accord Russian policy became committed to the division of Mongolia (and indeed it retained this policy after the 1917 Revolution). The leadership of independent Outer Mongolia, however, hoped to incorporate much of Inner Mongolia into a new Pan-Mongolian State, and popular discontent with Chinese rule made this an attractive prospect to many in Inner Mongolia. The final fifty years of the Qing Dynasty had prompted vastly increased Chinese colonization of Inner Mongolia. The rapid encroachment into Mongolian pastureland precipitated a number of uprisings against the Chinese. As the Qing collapsed there was a revolt in the region of Hulun Buir, and the rebels called for unification with Outer Mongolia. Other Inner Mongolian leaders, such as Prince Gungsangnorbu of the Harachin, called for autonomy from China but were unwilling to swear fealty to the Bogd Khan in Urga. Later that year Yuan Shikai, president of the newly proclaimed Republic of China, attempted to reimpose control of Inner Mongolia by force, and fighting broke out between Chinese troops and soldiers of the Bogd Khan who moved to support Mongolian unification.[38]

The Russian government, however, in accordance with its secret agreement with the Japanese, would not support the bid for unification. Without Russian backing Outer Mongolia found that it was in too weak a position to provide much more than moral support for the Inner Mongolian independence movement. The Chinese Republican forces retained control of much of Inner Mongolia, although the unrest continued and Hulun Buir remained autonomous until 1920.[39] Prince Gungsangnorbu became head of the Chinese Republic's Mongolian and Tibetan Office in Beijing, where he founded the Mongolian–Tibetan Academy in 1913. This school was to train many of the young modernizers who were later to shape Inner Mongolian politics.[40] The Japanese took advantage of the continuing Mongolian hostility towards the Chinese to increase their own influence in the area, appearing to support Inner Mongolian independence.[41] In 1915 the Japanese gained concessions in Inner Mongolia from the Republican government of Yuan Shikai, and Japanese influence in the region grew as a result.

China had never relinquished its claim to Outer Mongolia; indeed, the 1915 Treaty of Khiakta had given Outer Mongolia only the quasi-independent

[37] Ibid. 238.

[38] Bawden (1968: 199–200), states that thirty-five of the forty-nine banners of Inner Mongolia offered their allegiance to the Bogd Khan, and mentions fighting continuing throughout 1913. Jagchid (1988: 219–21) describes the diplomatic manœuvring in detail.

[39] This autonomous status was ratified by a Russo-Chinese treaty of 1915, see Atwood (1990: 34–6).

[40] Ibid. 17–20.

[41] See Lattimore (1934: 109–34).

status of 'autonomy under Chinese suzerainty'.[42] The 1917 Russian Revolution seemed to offer China an opportunity to reassert its control of the region, at a time when the tsarist government was in no position to retaliate. The Mongolian élite, nervous of the revolutionary groups gaining power in Russia, began to look towards China, once again, for protection and support. In 1919 General Xu Shuzheng arrived in Urga with a large army and took control. His rule came to be bitterly resented by the Mongolian élite, who were pleased when in 1920 a coup in Beijing forced Xu to retreat to China, leaving Urga in the hands of the more moderate Chinese commissioner Chen Yi. Later that year Urga was approached by the German commander of a White Russian force, Baron Ungern Sternberg. The Chinese were still unpopular, and the Baron managed eventually to capture the city and expel the Chinese. Any celebration in the capital was short-lived, however. Ungern Sternberg was such a fanatical and oppressive ruler that he quickly became unpopular among the inhabitants of Urga. A group of the more politically radical Mongolians, led by Sühbaatar, went to the Soviet Union to appeal for help. In 1921 a joint Soviet–Mongolian force ousted the 'Mad Baron' and occupied Urga. After the Bogd Khan's death in 1924 the new government founded the Mongolian People's Republic (MPR), which, although a Soviet satellite, was technically an independent country. China, however, refused to recognize Outer Mongolian independence until 1946.

Inner Mongolia remained attached to the Chinese State. The Republican government, and the warlords who were the *de facto* rulers of northern China in the early twentieth century, stepped up Chinese colonization of the area. This action was favoured because it was expected that a large Han Chinese population in Inner Mongolia would make the area more securely Chinese, and so prevent its separation from China.[43] This new influx of Chinese promoted a strong nationalist movement among the Mongols, who saw their lands being taken and their livelihood threatened, and there were some uprisings.[44] A number of the more radical Mongolians, many of them educated in Gungsangnorbu's Mongolian–Tibetan Academy, joined the Inner Mongolian Nationalist Party founded by Serengdüngrüb (Bai Yunti) in 1924.[45] The party changed its name to the Inner Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party in 1925, and had close ties with both the Chinese Guomindang (Nationalists) and the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party of the MPR.[46] The party also managed to gain the approval of Comintern and the Chinese Communists, and although it never enjoyed much real power, its name was to re-enter Inner Mongolian history much later, during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s.

[42] Bawden (1968: 201).

[43] See Chang (1933: 70).

[44] Such as the *Dugulan* movement of Shine Lam which emerged in Ordos around 1927.

[45] Serengdüngrub's original Mongolian name appears to have been Buyantai, and Bai Yunti was the sinified version. This seems to have come about from an impersonation – see Atwood (1990: 29).

[46] See Atwood (1990: 48), and Jagchid (1988: 264–73).

The dreams of a Pan-Mongolian state had not disappeared. There were calls from leaders such as Fumintai of Hulun Buir[47] to unite with the MPR, but to little effect. Although happy to promote revolutionary movements in China, the newly formed USSR had also inherited the policy of supporting the division of Mongolia from tsarist foreign policy, and saw no reason to change it. As far as Moscow was concerned the Chinese revolutionary movement had responsibility for Inner Mongolia, and so requests to unite Inner and Outer Mongolia fell upon deaf ears both in the USSR and in the MPR, which lined up with Soviet foreign policy.

The Guomindang government, which formally assumed power in 1928, continued to press ahead with Chinese colonization of Inner Mongolia. The same year, apparently in an attempt to divide and weaken the Inner Mongolian nationalist movement, Chiang Kai-Shek divided the region into four provinces: Ningxia, Suiyuan, Chahar, and Jehol.[48] Japanese influence in the area increased as Mongolian dissatisfaction with the Chinese grew. In 1931 the Japanese occupied Manchuria, and in 1933 they took Jehol and formed an autonomous Mongolian province within their Manchuruan satellite state of Manchuguo. That year Inner Mongolian leaders held a conference at Bailingmiao (Bat-haalag monastery) to launch a movement for Inner Mongolian autonomy. This movement included both radical and conservative Inner Mongolian leaders, and the figure to emerge at the head of the conservative nationalist movement was Prince Demchügdüngrüb, widely known by his Chinese name De Wang (Prince De). The Chinese National government in Nanking, however, would not agree to the high level of autonomy for Inner Mongolia proposed by the Bailingmiao conference.[49] Drawing on the widespread opposition among the Mongolians to the relentless sinification of their country, Prince De began to look to the Japanese for support and extended Prince Gungsangnorbu's Inner Mongolian educational programme by sending students to Japan.

The Japanese continued to extend their influence. In 1934 they gave covert support to anti-Chinese Mongolians in Chahar, and the next year Japanese troops clashed with those of the MPR for control of the Buir Nuur region in north-eastern Mongolia. In 1936, with Japanese aid, a military government was set up in Chahar with Prince De as the *de facto* leader, although the nominal head was Yün Wang.[50] That same year Prince De, supplied with Japanese arms, attacked Suiyuan, but was decisively defeated by Chinese troops.[51] In 1937 the Japanese overran much of northern China. To try and win the support of the

[47] At the 1924 congress of the MPRP Inner Mongolian leader Fumintai urged the unification of Inner and Outer Mongolia. He is described as a Barga leader (Rupen (1964: 187)), but Jagchid (1988: 265) notes that in fact he was a Dagur.

[48] Lattimore (1934: 127–34). Chang (1933: 73–4) counts five provinces, but he considers the Qinghai region to be Inner Mongolian in this context.

[49] Jagchid (1988: 247–8).

[50] Yu (1972: 4).

[51] Rossabi (1968: 248).

Mongolians in both Soviet and Chinese spheres of influence, the Japanese continued to court their aspirations of Inner Mongolian independence, and that year established the Autonomous Government of Inner Mongolia—'Mengjiang'. Again Prince De was the real leader, and in 1938 when Yün Wang died he took over openly as the head of the government. Mengjiang has been seen as the Japanese puppet government which claimed much of eastern Inner Mongolia, a Mongolian counterpart to the Manchurian puppet state of Manchukuo. It is now clear that the Autonomous Government of Inner Mongolia did serve the interests of Japan in its attempts to control China, but informants make clear that it was supported by many local Mongolians until Japan started to lose the war. The western part of Inner Mongolia, however, was not controlled by the Mengjiang administration, but remained in the hands of Chinese warlords such as General Fu Zuoyi in Suiyuan.

The Japanese were kept out of the MPR with the help of the Soviet Union. Clashes between Japanese and Soviet troops in 1938 led to the short Japanese–Soviet war the following year, when the Japanese attacked the Khalkiin Gol region on Mongolia's eastern borders. The Soviet Army under Zhukov joined with MPR troops to defeat the Japanese forces in August 1939. However, the Japanese continued to occupy Manchuria and eastern Inner Mongolia until their defeat at the hands of the Soviet–Mongolian Army in 1945. The Yalta conference between Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt in February that year established the spheres of influence of the superpowers, and Outer Mongolia was placed within the Soviet sphere.[52] Consequently, American pressure was put upon Chiang Kai-Shek to recognize the independence of the MPR, and in January 1946 the Guomindang Chinese government formally did so.

The Struggle for the Control of Inner Mongolia

The written historical sources reveal something of the tangled political intrigues of the period, but for an account of their impact on pastoral life one has to turn to the memories of Mongolian herders themselves. Although in retrospect Japanese control of the region was seen by many Mongolians as one of repression, the period was recalled without bitterness by an old herdsman in Hulun Buir who had been rich in the pre-communist society. He did not consider the early period of Japanese rule to have been unpopular among Mongolians, and approved of the way in which the administration suppressed the notorious bandits that had plagued the region. But he also recalled that later, when the war started to go against them, the Japanese apparently became more ruthless, conscripting people to act as forced labourers and executing civilians.

[52] Jagchid (1979: 235).

In many ways, informants agreed, pastoral life remained unchanged under the Japanese, who tended to be most visibly present in the cities and urban centres where they invested in administrative and educational facilities. The eastern part of Manchuguo, including most of the Mongolian banners, had been designated an 'autonomous Mongol province'[53] and local Mongolian officials seem to have been left, on the whole, to manage the *sum* affairs. There were shortages, they recalled: tea for instance was sometimes in short supply in the 1940s; but in other ways their lives were not strongly affected by the Japanese administration, at first. The war, however, had a more direct impact on their lives. Before their final victory in 1945 the Russians had made an earlier incursion into Japanese-controlled eastern Inner Mongolia, forcing local officials into hiding. An informant from the semi-agricultural Mongolian region of Jirem remembered the fate of one such official:

> The old *sum* head fled from the village and hid in the hills. After two weeks he had eaten all his food and came back to the *sum* to get something to eat. Three Russian soldiers were walking down the road at that time and they saw his horse, with its rich saddle, standing by the old leader's house. When he tried to flee the Russians trapped him in the courtyard. The old leader had a gun, he was the only man in the *sum* with a rifle, but there were three Russians, so he did not start shooting. He gave his gun to the Russians, thinking they would treat him well. But in fact they had no bullets for their own guns. They took his rifle and shot him with it.

The Buryats of Hulun Buir, many of whom had moved there from Russian-controlled territory to avoid the Soviet Army at the time of the Russian Civil War, seem to have been particularly badly treated. I was told that when they arrived the Russian soldiers raped Buryat women and looted the community's property. A herdsman in Shilingol also recalled the results of the Japanese defeat, but in more general terms. The Russians (unlike the Mongolian troops) could not understand the locals or their arguments, and seized large numbers of their livestock. They were suspicious of lamas, and apparently took seriously a rumour that some Japanese had tried to escape by shaving their heads and impersonating monks. At Bandid Gegeen monastery Russian troops were said to have shot forty or fifty lamas.[54]

As the Soviet and Mongolian troops drove the Japanese out of northern China and Manchuria the Mengjiang government collapsed, the banners became virtually self-governing, and different leaders and organizations vied for their support. In the confusion following the Japanese defeat it seems that some of the leaders of the old Mengjiang government attempted to change allegiance as quickly as possible, so as to gain the recognition of the Allies at

[53] This territory, Hsingan province, comprised much of the eastern part of Manchuguo, and its banners later became part of Hulun Buir, Hinggan, and Jirem *aimags* in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region.

[54] This was a monastery in eastern Shilingol, also written Pandita Gegeen. This massacre is also mentioned in Hyer and Jagchid (1983: 190) although they gave the number of dead as 120.

the end of the War.[55] In Shilingol and Chahar the former leaders of the Mengjiang government set up the Inner Mongolia Liberated Areas Association, which in September 1945 became the Inner Mongolia Republican Temporary Government. The leaders hoped for backing from the Outer Mongolians and the Soviets, who were initially supportive. However, the USSR and MPR did not want to upset the the spheres of interest agreed at Yalta. Inner Mongolia was to stay part of China's backyard, and on 10 October 1945 the Soviet and Chinese communist military signed an agreement allowing the People's Liberation Army to enter Inner Mongolia.

Since its foundation in 1921 the Chinese Communist Party began to attract a number of Mongolians. Ulanhu, the man who was to become the head of the Inner Mongolian administration under the Chinese communists, was a Tümed Mongolian born near present-day Hohhot. He was fluent in Chinese, and apparently could hardly speak Mongolian. His real name, Yün Ze, was Chinese, but he later adopted the Mongolian name Ulanhu, meaning 'red son', to stress both his Mongolian nationality and his commitment to communism. In 1922 Yün Ze was one of a number of Tümed Mongolians who went to Beijing to study at Prince Gungsangnorbu's Mongolian–Tibetan Academy. The prince was one of the leading advocates of the peaceful reform and transformation of the 'feudal' social order. Impressed by the Japanese experience of modernization, Gungsangnorbu considered education to be of key importance for the revitalization of Inner Mongolian society, and had campaigned for the establishment of schools in the region. The Inner Mongolian groups which most rapidly entered this new modernization movement were the Harchin, Horchin, and Tümed. When the first primary schools in Inner Mongolia were established in the 1920s most of these were in the Harchin and Tümed banners, and young Mongolians from these regions attended Prince Gungsangnorbu's Mongolian–Tibetan Academy in Beijing.[56] Familiar with bureaucracy and the Chinese language, the élite of these relatively sinified groups were well placed to play a part in the new political movements emerging in China.

The Tümed group at the Academy was active in the 1925 student demonstrations following the 30 May Incident in Shanghai, and Yün Ze was one of the earliest recruits of the Chinese Communist Party, which he joined in that year. In the winter of 1925 he was sent to study in the Soviet Union,[57] and around 1930 he returned to Inner Mongolia to try to mobilize support for the communists. In 1935 he joined the staff of General Fu Zuoyi, the Suiyuan warlord, fighting the Japanese. Four years later he made his way to the communist base in Yan'an and become a senior figure at the Minorities Institute there, training a core of politically active Mongolians. By 1944 Ulanhu was

[55] Yu (1972: 9). [56] Jagchid and Hyer (1979: 230).
[57] See Bartke and Schier (1985).

back in Inner Mongolia, organizing anti-Japanese activity, and by 1945 he had risen to become a deputy member of the CCP Central Committee. With the defeat of Japanese forces in Inner Mongolia Ulanhu led the communist efforts to win over the leaders of the region and prevent it falling into the control of the Guomindang.

The communists soon took control of the Inner Mongolian Republican Temporary Government, which lived up to its name. Having lasted little more than a month it was replaced by the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Movement Association with Ulanhu as its head. Although most of the Temporary Government members were included in the new organization, none of the founders were given posts of responsibility.[58] At this time the Chinese Communist Party was very active diplomatically, promising the Mongolians recognition of their rights as a 'minority nationality' and some level of autonomous government.[59] With the USSR and MPR no longer potential patrons, Mongolian leaders increasingly turned to the communists rather than the Guomindang who seemed less sympathetic. Some conservative Mongolian leaders, however, still hoped for support from the Guomindang, most notably Prince De. In November 1945 he met Chiang Kai-Shek in Chungking to try and win recognition of Inner Mongolian autonomy, but he met with little success.[60]

In January 1946 the Eastern Mongolian Autonomous Government (EMAG) was organized under Buyanmandah who had been the head of the Mongolian regions of the Japanese client state Manchuguo.[61] These areas had been termed the 'autonomous Mongol province' of Hsingan under the Manchuguo administration, but had become powerfully influenced by the communists. One of the leading figures of EMAG was Hafengga, who had formed links with the Chinese Communist Party.[62] The EMAG army included many units inherited from the old Japanese-sponsored Manchuguo government, but the real command of this force seems to have been in the hands of Chinese Communist Party political officers rather than its Mongolian leaders.[63]

[58] Yu (1972: 13).
[59] I use the term 'nationality' as Gladney (1991: 6) does, as a translation of the Chinese term *minzu*, an official status conferred by the Chinese state.
[60] Yu (1972: 5).
[61] Ibid. 32 suggests that EMAG was organized in January 1946 under Manibadara, but U. Bulag (1995 personal communication) notes that the head was Buyanmandah and Manibadara was the deputy head.
[62] Ibid. 29 suggests that it was through CCP influence that Hafongga gained almost absolute control of EMAG.
[63] Contemporary US estimates of its size vary from 9,000 to 70,000. Shirendyb and Sladkovskiy (1980: 70) mention 50,000 Mongolian cavalry used in November 1947 by the PLA and it seems probable that the bulk of this force was from the old EMAG army that had by then come under the command of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Government.

At a conference held at Cheng De in March 1946, Ulanhu began uniting the pro-communist Eastern Mongolian leadership with his own Inner Mongolia Autonomous Movement Association.[64] His diplomatic efforts were successful and EMAG dissolved itself in May, forming a provincial government of Hinggan[65] to administer the region that it controlled.[66] At the same time much of the leadership of EMAG formed a new Eastern Branch of Ulanhu's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Movement, with Hafengga as its head. The diplomatic efforts towards unity continued, and on 1 May 1947 the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Government was established with Ulanhu as president and Hafengga as vice-president.[67] Even at this time Ulanhu did not directly control more than a small part of Inner Mongolia, but had gained the support of other local Mongolian leaders that had emerged, such as Wulji Ochar[68] who controlled much of the Shilingol region.[69]

When Prince De returned to Inner Mongolia in the late 1940s, he went to join the Guomindang General Fu Zuoyi who had captured Kalgan in 1945, and controlled most of Suiyuan, Ih Juu, and the Han populated parts of Chahar. Relations between the Chinese general and the Mongolian nationalists of Prince De's faction were strained, and fraught with mistrust. Fu Zuoyi had apparently disbanded all but 1,500 of his 20,000 Mongolian troops, because he was worried about their loyalty.[70] The general had never been a popular figure among Mongolians, as in the regions he controlled he had done away with the traditional Mongolian banner governments and instituted the Chinese *xiang* districts in their place. Relations between the Mongolian and Han nationalists became so bad that Prince De went in fear of being killed by Fu Zuoyi if he became too independent.[71]

The tide of the Chinese Civil War began to turn against the Guomindang and in the spring of 1947 Kalgan fell to the communists. By late 1948 the dwindling supporters of Prince De were confined to the western part of Inner Mongolia, although they antagonized the local Alasha Mongolians. Here Prince De had some security as a result of the proximity of the Chinese nationalist army under the Muslim general Ma Hongkui, which controlled neighbouring Ningxia province. Leaders from Alasha, Ih Juu, and Ulaanchab were invited to meet under Prince De to organize the Inner Mongolia Autonomy Preparatory Committee. The prince hoped to unify the area and

[64] Rupen (1964: 260) suggests that EMAG was dissolved on 26–9 May.

[65] This is the Mongolian name, rather than the Chinese Hsingan.

[66] This seems to have been headed by Tomorbagan, according to U. Bulag (1995 personal communication).

[67] Yu (1972: 49).

[68] This name, transliterated Ölzii-Ochir from the Cyrillic Mongolian, has been widely spelt Wulji Ochar elsewhere. Wulji Ochar had been taken for retraining by the Soviet–Mongolian army when they took control of the region. He returned with his unit to form an important part of Ulanhu's military support.

[69] Yu (1972: 40).

[70] Rupen (1964: 261).

[71] Yu (1972: 42–6).

win concessions from the nationalists, particularly supplies for his small army of several thousand Mongolians.[72] By May 1949 Prince De had organized a provisional government and declared Inner Mongolia's autonomy, recognition of which he was on the verge of winning from the Guomindang. However, time was not on the prince's side, and as the victorious communist forces moved to attack his following, De's alliance fell apart. Some leaders fled and others surrendered. Prince De escaped to the MPR, but the government there, supportive of the new People's Republic of China, handed him over to the Chinese for imprisonment in 1952.

The circumstances of the prince's final defeat were characteristic of the failure of the Mongolian nationalist movement, which was unable to overcome the lack of unity among Inner Mongolian leaders in the face of greater powers. The various small Mongolian governments needed the backing of a major regional power to survive. The—realistic—perception of their own weakness by the Inner Mongolian leadership meant that they were easily won over by whichever powerful neighbour offered them the best reward and had the highest chance of delivering it, be it Japanese, Soviet, or Chinese. Eventually the Chinese communists emerged as the inevitable victors, despite the preference many leaders may have had for independence, or failing that, unification with the MPR.

The herdsmen of Shilingol that I knew said that after the turmoil of the Russian withdrawal, the subsequent struggle passed them by. There was, apparently, some fighting in the region, but they described the only resistance to the communists as being from 'bandits' although it may be that these were, in fact, the remnants of Prince De's army. However, there were too few of these opponents, bandits or not, to offer serious resistance, and those who did not surrender were killed.[73]

The Mongolian nationalists such as Prince De were not the only groups advocating Inner Mongolian independence. The Inner Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party was composed mostly of Mongols, and was in favour of uniting with the Mongolian People's Republic. Formed originally in the 1920s, it was revived in the 1940s as a vehicle for left-wing Mongolian nationalism. This party was dissolved around 1947 as part of Ulanhu's diplomatic efforts, and the communists incorporated some of its membership. However, the revived Inner Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party was to become famous again, twenty years later, during the Cultural Revolution.

The Chinese communists had quickly extended their control south into the Chinese heartland, repeatedly defeating the Guomindang army. By 1949 China was clearly in the hands of the communists, and the People's Republic

[72] Ibid. 54–66. The reports suggest his force numbered around 10,000.

[73] Some of the fiercest resistance to the communists came from a group of Buryats who had escaped from the Russian communists and ended up in Shilingol: U. Bulag (1995 personal communication).

of China was founded. Over the following few years Ulanhu's Inner Mongolian Autonomous Government extended its jurisdiction. Ulanhu himself went on to hold a series of top positions in the new administration: First Secretary of the IMAR Party Committee, Commander and Political Commissar of the Inner Mongolian Military Region, Alternative Member of the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party; and he became the Vice-Premier of the People's Republic of China in 1954. This extraordinary concentration of power in the hands of one man, and its legacy, profoundly influenced the political history of the region.

Largely as a result of Ulanhu's diplomatic efforts, relations between China and the Mongolian People's Republic improved in the mid-1950s, leading to an aid programme in which thousands of Chinese workers were sent to work on construction projects in Mongolia. However, the breakdown of Sino-Soviet relations in the late 1950s and early 1960s led to the USSR becoming the MPR's sole patron, and Outer Mongolian relations with Beijing becoming minimal. The prospect of a unified and independent state including both Inner and Outer Mongolia had finally disappeared.

2

Pre-Revolutionary Society and Economy in Pastoral Inner Mongolia

The early twentieth century had seen the emergence of a new political elite of young, educated, Inner Mongolian intellectuals, with experience of Japanese, nationalist, and communist administrations, a number of whom had eventually joined Ulanhu's following. However, at the time that the communists gained control of Inner Mongolia many rural and pastoral areas had a social order that had hardly changed since the days of the Qing dynasty. Although the Japanese had introduced a system for appointing a qualified banner head in the areas they had administered, in general there had been no radical changes to social or political institutions. The Japanese had begun to introduce a new administrative and educational system, but they had also continued to recognize the titles, honours, and prerogatives of hereditary princes within their banners.[1] Furthermore, Mongolian banners throughout Inner Mongolia had continued to use Manchu law as the basis of civil administration, right up until the advent of communist rule.[2]

Social Stratification

Despite the popular images of nomads as egalitarian, 'fierce and free', there is no doubt that before the revolutionary policies introduced by communist government, Mongolian social order was clearly stratified and hierarchically organized. This series of sociopolitical ranks was common to both Inner and Outer Mongolia, and apart from the Buddhist clergy (who enjoyed relatively high social mobility), status was generally ascribed by birth. In secular society changes of status were normally limited to movement within two broad categories, the nobility and the commoners.

The nobility (*noyod*) were principally composed of those considered to be members of the Borjigin clan of Chinggis Khan and their spouses. Adult male clan members usually held the title *taij*, and as genealogy was largely patrilineal, this title was passed to all the sons of a prince.[3] Since the seventeenth

[1] Lattimore (1934: 142). In 1931 there were efforts by the Chinese government to abolish the hereditary *jasag* system, but this was blocked by conservative Mongolian princes, see Jagchid and Hyer (1979: 331).

[2] Jagchid and Hyer (1979: 382).

[3] The commoner husband of a noblewoman gained a special (noble) title, *tabunang*, but did not become a *taij*. In some places this title was only given to the son-in-law of a banner prince, in other areas it was applied to any man who married a noblewoman (see Vreeland 1962: 11). Among the

century the main unit of Inner Mongolian administration was the *hoshuu* or 'banner.' Throughout the Manchu period, most banners had been the fief of the noble who inherited the position of *jasag* (or *wang* in Chinese, translated as 'prince'). The banners were fixed administrative units and only one of the banner prince's sons could be chosen to inherit the title of *jasag*. The other sons retained their title of *taij*, indicating noble status, and would often gain some other official position in the administration of the banner.[4] The imperial bureaucracy in Inner Mongolia had four official ranks for *taij*s in official posts, each with a given salary, as well as more senior titles that could be awarded with high office. As there were a limited number of official posts, however, there had grown up a sizeable group of nobles who held no offices and administered no subjects. These diminished nobles were known as *hoh' taij*. They retained the rank of nobility and were not liable for the corvée services the commoners were, but could become poor if they encountered bad luck.

Apart from the Borjigin, clans had a varying importance in different areas of Mongolia. In some regions there were other leading clans and lineages who tended to dominate certain positions in the bureaucracy, in other areas only the nobility seem to have retained an extended kinship system. In Manchuria the Mongolian banners were not ruled by Borjigid[5] princes, but administered in the same way that the Manchu banners were. This system made local clans part of the administration, and gave them an important role in the regulation of social life.[6]

The commoners were generally known by the term *harch*[7] or *albat* ('ones with duty'). This broad status can be divided into four categories: (1) personal servants of nobles and officials (*har'yat* or *hamjlaga*[8]); (2) monastic servants and subjects (*shabinar*[9]—described by Bawden as 'church serfs'[10]); (3) the imperial subjects owing legal obligations to their lord (*ard*, *albat*, or *sumyn ard*); and (4) slaves who were owned by nobles or wealthy commoners (*bool* or *höbööd*). Of higher rank than these four categories of commoner was the

Harachin, whose Borjigid nobility were exterminated by the Manchu, the new noble class took this term *tabunang* as a hereditary title instead of *taij*, see Jagchid and Hyer (1979: 276).

[4] They were known by the term *sul noyod*, see ibid. 277. [5] The plural form of Borjigin.

[6] The exception to this rule were banners administered by appointed officials (*amban*), such as the eight Chahar banners. However, this had tended to become hereditary also. The Tumed had also had their princely class eliminated and replaced with *amban*. The Hulun Buir Mongols and Manchurian Daurs were administered using the Manchu banner system.

[7] *Harts* Cyrillic, *xaraču*, classical transliteration.

[8] *Xarijatu* and *xamzilg-a*, classical transliteration. The first was widely used in Inner Mongolia, the second in Ordos and Outer Mongolia. The use of the term *har'yat* was complex, however, describing the relative position of being a servant or vassal to some lord, and thus could be used to describe subjects who were not personal servants. Technically, *shabinar* were also *har'yat*, and so exempt from state duties; see Jagchid and Hyer (1979: 289). Those servants who were sent with a noblewoman when she married were known by another name—*inj*.

[9] This is the plural form, the singular being *shab'*, and meaning 'disciple'.

[10] Bawden (1968: 106).

status of the *darhan*. This position can be described as that of 'freedmen' in that *darhad* were nominally free of the obligation of corvée service.[11] The status was generally bestowed upon commoners when they retired from one of the senior positions in the banner administration; although not a noble, a *darhan* had certain privileges, and often it was members of *darhad* lineages who tended to occupy mid-level administrative posts.

The hereditary personal servant of a particular noble was generally bound to look after his lord's household and animals, and as part of a noble's entourage the *har'yat* was theoretically exempt from state corvée duties.[12] The imperial subjects (*ard*), however, were not full-time servants of the banner prince, but in a position analogous to serfs in a feudal society. They were tied to their banner and its lord,[13] and were liable for taxation and corvée duties, such as serving the officials as messengers, clerks, or labourers. This service varied tremendously from family to family and year to year, depending upon the requirements of the particular local officials. In the nineteenth century this corvée duty was often replaced by the payment of a tax, and by the twentieth century the minority of subjects who were required to perform service in person might typically serve officials for a few months at a time in a given year.[14]

Although the *shabinar* monastic subjects were technically classed as the servants (*har'yat*) of a monastery or temple, the duties they performed for their religious institution were rather similar to the obligations owed by the *ard* to the banner prince. They made payments to the monastery according to their wealth, and were sometimes called upon to provide other services, such as transporting goods and personnel. They also looked after the monastery's herds, using traditional Mongolian arrangements for leasing animals and being rewarded for this work with a portion of the animal produce. This provided many *shabinar* families with a large proportion of their income, although most also herded animals of their own. The *shabinar* were generally descendants of families transferred to religious establishments by nobles, and children that had been given to the monastery, and were in theory exempt from state tax, although local officials frequently broke such rules to increase their revenue.[15]

The slaves (*bool*, or *höbööd*[16]) were at the very bottom of the hierarchy, and although there were cases of slaves being given their freedom[17] their status was generally hereditary. This class was quite small, by all accounts, with few

[11] This status is not to be confused with the Darhad ethnic group of Northern Mongolia. See Jagchid and Hyer (1979: 287–8) for a discussion of the rights and status of the *Darhad*.

[12] Bawden (1968: 150) notes that in Outer Mongolia people of this class were often liable for these duties in practice.

[13] Ibid. 88. [14] Vreeland (1962: 120–40). [15] Bawden (1968: 161–2).

[16] This term seems to be the plural of *höböön* (meaning 'border' or 'hem', written *kobegen*, classical transliteration).

[17] See Bawden (1968: 138).

slaves found in pastoral regions. In theory, however, both noble and common Mongolians might own slaves, provided they had the wealth to buy and support them. They could be bought and sold, and did not even have the right to marry without their owner's permission. Such slaves could apparently be 'married' by their master to some object, such as an axe, and this fiction reinforced the slave status of their children. A friend from Jirem *aimag* recalled:

> In my grandfather's time there were a number of slaves in his district. They were usually kept by *taij*s, and there were rules on the maximum number that a *taij* could keep, depending on his rank. There were four ranks of *taij*, and the higher the rank the more slaves you were allowed to have. Most nobles would have a few such slaves. They were usually allowed to get married to other slaves or servants, but they would usually have to stay with the noble family that owned them (unless freed or transfered to another family). Sometimes a female slave would be married to an object—such as an axe (*sühe*), or millstone (*teerem* or *ying*), or *hagan*—a post. This meant she could have children, as if she was a married woman, but would not be able to leave her owners' household [to live with a husband]. When the Japanese administered the region they tried to abolish slavery, and they certainly weakened it, but the practice continued in many rural areas in the 1940s.

There has been much discussion as to the applicability of the term 'feudal' to describe Mongolia under the Manchus, ever since Vladimirtsov coined the term 'nomadic feudalism' in his classic work *Le Régime social des Mongols: le féodalisme nomade*. In the 1950s and 1960s Soviet scholars such as Tolybekov and Markov challenged the applicability of this word, emphasizing the kin-based nature of pastoral nomadic society.[18] More recently, Khazanov has rejected the notion of nomadic feudalism, at least as a description of the Mongol polity founded by Chinggis Khan. Jagchid and Hyer, however, do not entirely reject the term 'feudalism' and attempt to circumvent the difficulties posed by this debate by describing Mongolian society as 'quasi-feudal.'[19] Lattimore, however, is forthright in describing later Mongolian society under the Manchus as 'truly feudal'.[20] Elsewhere he writes 'there are those who hesitate to call the Mongolian social order "feudal", but I do not see how the term can be avoided: aristocratic rank was hereditary and identified with territorial fiefs, and serfdom was also hereditary and territorially identified'.[21] His approach conforms to that of Mongolian historians such as Natsagdorj and Sanjdorj who, drawing on the wealth of materials available to them, are able to argue convincingly that in the Manchu period, if not before, Mongolia's society can be described as feudal.

Inner Mongolian scholars also adopted the term, and the notion that it described pre-revolutionary (i.e. pre-communist) society. The word 'feudal' (Mongol. *fèodal*) was borrowed from the Russian and introduced to Inner

[18] See Gellner (1988), ii.
[19] Jagchid and Hyer (1979: 264).
[20] Lattimore (1980: 8).
[21] Lattimore (1976: 3).

Mongolia some time in the twentieth century. Because of the importance feudalism played in Marxist theory after the communists gained control of the region the term became widely used as a politically loaded noun to describe the ruling lords of the 'old society'.

Inevitably, the applicability of the term depends upon one's definition. An inclusive definition, such as Weber's, describes the key criteria of feudalism to be enfiefment,[22] the division between commoners and nobility, and a political system which tied commoners to land administered by the enfiefed lord. All these conditions existed in pre-revolutionary Mongolia. On the other hand the more exclusivist characterizations of feudalism, such as that of Bloch, include a number of conditions that would exclude a mobile pastoral society.[23] In this account I have, following Bawden, used the term 'feudal' simply as a convenient shorthand term to describe the stratified social order.

Cosmology and the Institutions of Buddhism

Mongolian culture was suffused with Buddhist themes, and even today the old cosmology remains an important strand in the world-view of the religious and many elderly Mongolians.[24]

Reincarnation is a central theme in this cosmology as it was explained to me. The immaterial essence and animating principal of any living being is its *süns*, which can be translated as 'soul'.[25] Although the physical body may perish, 'the soul dies-not' (*süns ühgüi*) and it has been reborn, in one form or another, since the beginning of time. The body of a creature is merely the vessel for the *süns*, occupied temporarily, and in each reincarnation the thoughts and actions of a soul have spiritual consequences that directly

[22] i.e. hereditary rights to land are given on condition of rendering military support to the sovereign. Weber (1923: 61) identifies the 'western feudal system and that of Japan, with the development of feudal proprietorship through enfiefment'. He also applies the term to Turkey and Russia. Gellner's (1981: 187–8) use of the term implies that he considers the essential characteristics of feudalism to be that of a hierarchical, stable power structure supporting an enfiefed aristocracy through the corvée labour of their subjects.

[23] Bloch gives these conditions as 'A subject peasantry; widespread use of the service tenement (i.e. the fief) instead of salary . . . the supremacy of a class of specialised warriors; ties of obedience and protection which bind man to man and, within the warrior class assume the distinctive form called vassalage; fragmentation of authority . . . and . . . the survival of other forms of association, family and State.' However, Bloch (1961: 446) terms this *European* feudalism, and actually supports the application of the term 'feudalism' to other societies, such as Japan. He writes, 'Just as the matrilineal or agnatic clan or even certain types of economic enterprise are found in much the same form in very different societies, it is by no means impossible that societies different from our own should have passed through a phase . . . [that can be termed] . . . feudal.'

[24] Accounts vary slightly and all the details of this cosmological schema were not necessarily shared by everyone in pre-revolutionary society, but each individual would have a more or less similar version of it, depending on their familiarity with Buddhist scripture. Here I provide only an outline as it was described to me.

[25] *Synesy*, classical transliteration.

influence its own fate or destiny (*jayaa*[26]) in its next life. Good deeds yield *buyan* (merit), evil deeds bring about *nügel* (sin). These two opposing properties are accumulated over a given lifetime so that at the body's death the balance between a soul's meritous and sinful deeds will dictate the nature of its next reincarnation.

Sin leads to reincarnation in one of the lower levels, as an animal, a 'starving ghost', or (for the greatest sin) as an inmate of hell. Those who gain sufficient merit will have a good rebirth (*sain töröl*) as a human. Some souls have so much merit and enlightenment that they could escape from the wheel of existence altogether and enter Nirvana (*nirvaan*), but they choose to be reborn as humans so as to help the rest of humankind to escape from sin. These are *hubilgaan*—the reincarnate buddhas, *bodhisattva*s or other saintly persons that are reborn as such because of their extreme holiness. The Lord Buddha, *Shagjamuni*, (also known as *Burhan Bagsh* or 'Holy Teacher') is not reincarnated but his teachings have shown others the way to enlightenment.

Existence contains six worlds (*yörtönch*),[27] ranked in order of blessedness, and depicted in the 'wheel of the cosmos' painting found in most monasteries.[28] The supreme world was Heaven—the Realm of the *tenger* (gods). *Tenger*[29] is an ancient Mongol term, dating from well before the spread of Buddhism, and refers to heaven, the sky, and gods. In this context it means the general category of gods which in some senses represent personifications of heaven. However, the term also refers to particular *tenger*,[30] of which there are said to be thirty-three.[31] This heavenly plane is ruled by *Hürmüst Tenger* – originally the Mongolian name of the Zoroastrian deity Ahuramazda, but included in the Buddhist pantheon by being identified as the god Indra, Lord of Heaven. In this realm also dwell many other *burhan* –buddhas and deities of which the most holy is Burhan Bagsh, the Lord Buddha, Shakyamuni.[32]

Below heaven, although connected to it, there is the realm of the *asuri*, (sometimes called *tenger-bus*, 'non-gods').[33] These fierce demigods were once

[26] *Zayaa*, Cyrillic; *zajag-a*, classical transliteration.

[27] *Yortonts*, Cyrillic; *jirtinǰy*, classical transliteration, meaning world, universe, or cosmos.

[28] Hurelbaatar (1996: 24). Pozdneyev (1978: 122–7) notes that the wheel he saw in Outer Mongolia had only five worlds. Waddell notes, however, that sometimes the *asuri* were not represented separately—thus giving only five realms.

[29] Written *ngri* in the classical script.

[30] Such as *Ohin Tenger* (the 'Girl *Tenger*').

[31] Some of the surviving ritual chants of 'shamanic' origin mention ninety-nine *tenger*—fifty-five good and forty-four evil. This may suggest that the pre-Buddhist religious system had such a number of *tenger* (although it is possible that these numbers emerged later when shamanism was marginalized by Buddhism): Heissig (1980: 49). However, in the Buddhist Mongolian cosmology there are generally thirty-three *tenger*, probably corresponding to the thirty-three Vedic gods in Tibetan Buddhist cosmology, see Waddell (1958: 367–8, 85–6).

[32] The Buddha, Gautama.

[33] *Ngri-busu*, classical transliteration. *Asuri* is from the Sanskrit term Asura meaning a type of evil spirit. Unlike my informants, Yönsög (1991: 260), calls this world the realm of Erlig Khan (*Erligiin Oron*) and makes no mention of *Asuri*.

gods, but were expelled for sinning, and they wage an endless and fruitless war against heaven. Always defeated by the true gods, they suffer injuries and deaths in battle, with all the associated miseries. Next there is the World of Humans (*Hüny Yörtönch*), which was also called the 'empty world' (*hooson yörtönch*) because of the hollowness and futility of the human condition, or as 'red dust' (*ulaan tooson*) to stress the mundane and ephemeral nature of the body. Here suffering and sin are ever present, but humans do have the opportunity to gain merit through good deeds.

Lower still lies the Realm of Animals (*Adgunsany Oron*). This is the highest of the 'three bad destinies' (*gurban muu jayaa*), the lower levels of reincarnation. All living things have souls, even insects, but must endure their poor animal lives until their next reincarnations. The world beneath this is the Realm of Starving Ghosts (*Ölön Chötgöriin* or *Birdiin Oron*).[34] Here the ever-hungry souls suffer in the form of *bird*—monstrous creatures with giant bellies and huge ugly heads. Despite their gigantic size their throats are as narrow as a hair. They are always desperately thirsty and hungry, but cannot swallow because of their tiny gullet. Trying endlessly to eat and drink, if a *bird* manages to force a drop water down its throat it burns the instant it reaches the belly, and destroys the creature horribly. However, their sins are such that they will be regenerated to suffer again. The lowest world is Hell (*Tam*) ruled by Erlig Khan, god of the dead, and staffed by his cruel animal-headed servants. *Tam* has eighteen levels into which the most sinful souls descend, and in which souls suffer different types of dreadful torture, such as being frozen in ice, dismembered, cooked in cauldrons, or burnt in fires. Particularly horrific punishments are inflicted on those who attacked lamas or rejected Buddhist teachings.

This is a moral cosmology loaded with normative meanings, some of which are immediately evident. The torments of Hell, for example, vividly illustrate the terrible price to be paid for selfishness and evil acts—particularly against the sanga, that is, those within Buddhism qualified to perform religious duties. The very concept of the starving ghosts entails a moral lesson – desires can never be satisfied and will always lead to sorrow; the only certain answer is to escape from desire itself. Even today, people who are greedy or grasping may be described as a *bird*, and the term is not used merely as a gibe but also as an allegory of the fruitless suffering entailed by greed. The world of the *asuri*, filled with strife and defeat, illustrates the futility of struggling against the divine order. The description of the World of Humans as 'hollow' stresses the importance of the spiritual and religious over and above immediate material gratification; and the existence of the *tenger*, *burhan*, and other spirits locates humans as lesser beings, subject to higher, heavenly

[34] *Olyng ulkyr-yn orun* (Realm of Hungry Ghosts) or *burid-yn orun* (Realm of the Bird), classical transliteration.

forces. The cosmos operates by moral 'laws of gravity' within which each individual is responsible for his or her own future, rising or sinking depending on behaviour. Being selfish, harming other creatures, or defying Buddhist teachings damages an individual's own destiny. The mechanism by which this process is realized, however, resembles the operation of a supernatural State. After death the soul is subject to the judgement of the stern King of the Dead, Erlig Khan, who is kept informed of all mortal misdeeds by his spiritual servants and magical mirror. On the other hand, to be devout, pray, show mercy, and help others is, ultimately, to help oneself to gain a better place in the next life.

In addition to the *burhan*, *tenger*, *asuri*, and *bird* shown on the 'wheel of life', Mongolian cosmology includes many other spirits and minor dieties—such as the local spirit rulers of the land (*gajryn ejed*) who govern the weather and environmental conditions of each locality of the natural world. The spirits of mountains are particularly respected and well known, as are those of great rivers and lakes. Such spirits are propitiated at ritual cairns made of stones and/or branches, called *oboo*. The *gajryn ejed*, like the *tenger*, also appear to long predate widespread Buddhism in Mongolia, but were included in the later cosmology by identification with Tibetan Buddhist local spirits, and termed *nibdag* and *shibdag* after them. In addition there are other entities, some malevolent—such as the *chötgör*, (demons or ghosts) or *hug* (evil spirits); some more or less tamed by buddhas and lamas, such as the *sahius* (guardian spirits).[35]

The Buddhist establishment (or 'church') was a vast institution, composed of a network of monasteries and temples governing extensive lands throughout Inner and Outer Mongolia. Its influence permeated the entire society, and it had long been a widely held goal for each Mongolian family to have at least one son who was a lama. The monasteries were the major educational establishments up until the twentieth century. At about 8 to 10 years of age the boys were sent to stay at the monastery as *bandi*[36] (pupils) to study. When they were deemed ready they would attain the rank of *gesel* (acolyte) and take the Lesser Vows (*Bag Sanvaar*) of a lama. The majority—estimated by Maisky at two-thirds of the candidates[37]—would finish their religious education at this stage, usually when they were around 15 to 20 years of age, and then return to their families. Although the Lesser Vows required lamas to remain celibate, many lived with a woman, established a household and raised a family. These 'country lamas' (*hödöönii lam*) would regularly attend religious services at their local monastery or temple several times a year. In their localities they might be able to earn a little money for blessings, and assisting at funerals.[38]

[35] *Sakigulsu*, classical transliteration. This term could also mean a protective amulet or charm.

[36] Miller (1959: 44). The term is from the Sanskrit term *vandya* ('one to be saluted'); not to be confused with the term *bandid* (from the Sanskrit *pandita*), meaning savant, scholar, or teacher. In Inner Mongolia these pupils were often known as *shab'*.

[37] Miller (1959: 28).

The remaining youths who stayed on at the monastery could, given sufficient funds and aptitude, go on to take the Great Vows (*Ih Sanvaar*) and become *gelüngs*,[39] fully ordained lamas. This could take many years but those sufficiently gifted could make rapid progress. The grand-uncle of a Mongolian friend named Ochir, for example, was a good student and became a *gelüng* when he was only 17 years old, rather than the more usual age of 18 to 20. Monks would often continue their spiritual education by taking higher degrees in one of the recognized religious disciplines, often moving to monasteries with high reputations in their chosen field.[40]

The Buddhist sanga were almost exclusively male (although there were said to be some Mongolian Buddhist nuns in Wu Tai Shan in Shanxi province of China).[41] There were, however, relatively large numbers of female devotees (*chabganch*)[42] who continued to live in lay society, but who took vows, shaved their heads, and dressed in similar robes to lamas.

By the early twentieth century Inner Mongolia had over a thousand monasteries and temples.[43] The majority were small temples (*süm*) that usually had only a few resident lamas. Several hundred monasteries (*hiid* or *hüree*) existed,[44] housing from fifty to a thousand lamas. They usually owned large herds of livestock, kept for them by the monastic subjects (*shabinar*), and often had land, farmed by Han Chinese tenant farmers. Such monasteries could also make a considerable income from trading and transportation activities, in participation with Chinese merchants.[45]

Monastic estates were hierarchically organized with the most humble positions occupied by *shabinar* who merely worked for the monasteries and were not members of the sanga as such. Above these in status lay the poor lamas who worked as servants for the more senior sanga so as to make a living, and the country lamas who were not resident at monasteries, but who attended religious services. Next in order of increasing rank were the lamas (generally *gelüng*) who had long-term places in the monastery, under the direction of

[38] *Mengguzu Shehui Lishi Diaocha*, 60–4.

[39] This is written *gelen* in transliteration from the Cyrillic script (and *gelyng* by Lessing), but here I use the form that is closest to the current Inner Mongolian pronunciation.

[40] Miller (1959: 44–6).

[41] Mongolian lamas had their own quarter in the great Wu Tai Shan temple complex, which accommodated lamas from all over China, Mongolia, and Tibet. Apparently there were some nunneries there and a small number of Mongolian Buddhist nuns.

[42] The term *chabganch* (written *sibaganca* in classical script and *chabgants* in Cyrillic) was used to mean both a 'nun' who had taken the Great Vows, and a female lay devotee.

[43] Miller (1959: 30). Heissig (1980: 1).

[44] Pozdneyev (1978: 25–6). A general term sometimes used for a *hiid*, *huree*, or *sum* was *juu*.

[45] Bawden (1968: 163) shows that in Outer Mongolia nearly half the income of a typical monastery came from these sources, and Pozdneyev (1978: 31–2) also notes the importance of this activity.

seniors who held various positions of authority in the administration of the monastery. These senior monks often ruled their subordinates with a rod of iron, and some were noted for their brutality.[46]

At the top of these structures were around one hundred reincarnations of high lamas known as *hutagt*s or *gegeen*s.[47] Most monasteries were designated as the seat of one or other *hutagt*, but there were generally other senior lamas who actually administered the institutions for them, usually termed the *da lam*, *shireen lam*, or, if they administered banners, *jasag lam*.[48] The monasteries and their attendant estates were often very wealthy, and might govern 2,000 *shabinar* or more.[49] Theoretically, all lamas enjoyed certain privileges (such as being exempt from military and corvée service), and this helped make the vocation extremely popular. In some regions the number of lamas amounted to between one-third and one-half of the entire male population.[50] Apart from *shabinar* and the subjects of the church, Miller estimates that there were between 135,000 and 375,000 lamas (country and full-time monks) in the mid-nineteenth century.[51] If two-thirds of these lamas lived in the rural districts, this suggests that there must have been between 45,000 and 125,000 lamas living in monasteries.[52]

Prayer was one of the lama's most important activities; most temples and monasteries held regular religious meetings (*hural*) in which lamas chanted Tibetan prayers read from sacred texts, and similar services were also conducted at ritual occasions such as funerals and *oboo* (sacred cairn) ceremonies. However, some lamas, known as *gürtüm*,[53] specialized in entering a trance so that spirits could possess their bodies. In a manner reminiscent of the techniques of the pre-Buddhist *böö* (shaman) the *gürtüm lam*, when possessed, was a vehicle and mouthpiece for the spirit or deity to deliver oracles and perform miracles. I was told that something like half the monasteries had a resident *gürtüm*. These specialists may not have trained as lamas; some individuals simply found that they were called by a spirit to act as its *hölög* (vessel or steed). A man named Dambiosor, for example, became the *gürtüm* at a small monastery in Naiman banner, Jirem *aimag*. According to one of his descendants, Dambiosor was a layman, a householder with a wife and children. He had long been given to fits and going into trances, but when he was in his early thirties he was chosen by a *sahius* (guardian spirit or deity) to be its vessel (*hölög*). He lived in the western part of the banner, and Dambiosor started to

[46] Bawden (1968: 167–8).

[47] *Xutugtu*, classical transliteration. Often written as *khutukhtu* in roman transliteration. The other commonly used term was *gegeen* (holiness, illuminated one) and the general term for all reincarnations of buddhas, bodhisattvas, or saints was *huvilgaan*.

[48] *Da Blam-a*; *Siregen Blam-a*; *Zasag Blam-a*, classical transliteration.

[49] Miller (1959: 112). [50] Jagchid and Hyer (1979: 299). [51] Miller (1959: 19).

[52] This suggests that the number of lamas living permanently in monasteries was somewhere in the order of 10% of the entire male Mongolian population.

[53] *Gyrtymbe*, classical transliteration.

have fits in which the spirit that possessed him would say 'my monastery is to the east', and eventually his older brother took him to look for the place mentioned in the trances. Eventually they found a small monastery that seemed to fit the clues they had been given.

The *gegeen* (reincarnate buddha) of the monastery met the brothers and listened to their accounts of the words spoken by Dambiosor when in trance. He explained that a generation or so before there had been an incident concerning a *sahius* that had guarded a large nearby monastery. The guardian spirit had been too fierce and strict on the worshippers, punishing them for minor transgressions with illness, sometimes even death. The *sahius* had been banished by the previous *gegeen* of the large monastery and now, it seemed, wanted to return. When he was consulted on the matter the *gegeen* of the large monastery was unsure as to whether the *sahius* should be allowed to stay at the small monastery (which was under his jurisdiction) or welcomed back into his old home. A ceremony was held to test these theories; prayers were chanted to summon the *sahius* which possessed the body of Dambiosor and showed by various signs that it was indeed the old guardian spirit returned. This meant that there was no need for any of the more dangerous ordeals by which prospective *gürtüm* could be tested to see if they were genuine. (One of these involved the swallowing of a small quantity of gold. If the candidate was false it was thought that the gold would kill him.)

The senior *gegeen* agreed that the guardian spirit could stay at the small monastery that the brothers had first visited, much to the delight of the local *gegeen* who was pleased at the prospect of a notable and powerful spirit being resident (and the many worshippers and offerings that it would attract). So Dambiosor shaved his head and moved into the monastery. His family came to stay in the nearby village. On the second, eighth and sixteenth days of the lunar calendar Dambiosor had to summon the *sahius*. He wore the usual costume of the *gürtüm*, consisting of a steel helmet with flags attached to the top, and a robe decorated with metal plates like armour. Several monks would chant prayers to summon the spirit, and Dambiosor, seated on his special seat, would enter a trance. When he was possessed the lamas would bow to him and ask their questions. In general *gürtüm* lamas were often associated with fierce spirits, often said to have originally been pagan 'shamanic' spirits that had submitted to some buddha or *hubilgaan* and become guardians of monasteries. In many of the larger monasteries there were small buildings dedicated to these *sahius*, where they received regular offerings of incense, butter-lamps, and prayers.

Religious activity was by no means confined to the sanga, but was an ever-present aspect of day-to-day pastoral life. Virtually every home had a *burhan* (an image of a buddha), usually with a small altar on which offerings were placed. Prayer flags (called *hii mor'*, 'wind horses') were commonly attached to poles in a pastoral encampment. Among both young and old it was usual

to wear an amulet or piece of string (*jangia*)[54] that had been blessed by a lama, and most older people carried rosaries to count their prayers. As Bulag (1998: 42) points out, mass participation in Buddhism made 'high culture'—art, prayer, and literature—available to the entire society, and helped mitigate the hierarchy of the secular order.

Many lay persons, particularly women who made up the majority of the laity, would take Buddhist vows to live a good but secular life. The devotee would ask a senior lama to perform the ceremony in which they made a number of pledges, such as, for example, the ten basic vows known as the *ubshyn sahil*.[55] These vows, as told to me, were to refrain from killing living beings, stealing, lying, committing adultery, drinking alcohol, using cosmetics, singing *shi juchug* (popular Chinese opera), sitting on high seats, eating other than at meal-times, and hoarding money or property. Such devotions were often undertaken by women and men who were past middle age, but not all of those who took vows were old. Ochir told me:

> My grandmother took religious vows when she was in her twenties. After she got married she often became ill. So she went to a diviner *üjeech*[56] to find out about the problem and was told that she would probably only have a short life. In the area there was a well-know lama called Gergen Bagsh[57] and she went to see him. She made three vows (*tangarag*) and he gave her a secret *tarni* (mantra or spoken charm), a life extender, to protect her. It was the mantra of Ayuush Burhan[58]—who can prolong peoples lives—and she repeated it to herself every day, but was not supposed to tell anyone else what it was. She lived until she was 73 because, people say, of that mantra.

There were also said to be extremely secret mantras that could give great powers to the user, and those lamas who knew them could tell them to only one other person in their lifetimes. Some provided powerful protection so that those who knew the charm could take a poisoned drink and, by repeating the words to themselves and blowing on the liquid before drinking, be immune from its effects.

Such minor vows and the acquiring of mantras and other charms need not involve much change in lifestyle, but a more serious religious commitment was made by those women who assumed the status of a *chabganch* (a term that is sometimes translated as 'nun'). This was fairly common among women of around 50 or 60 years of age, after they had decided to have no more children or had passed childbearing age. A senior lama performed the short ceremony in which the devotee would bow[59] to him, make her vows, and receive a rosary that he had blessed. The vows included the *ubshyn sahil*, the promise to abstain from sexual activity, and at least three pledges to do some good works, one of which must relate to daily lifestyle, such as giving up smoking or drinking. The *chabganch* shaved her head and adopted the same brown robes that lamas wore (although usually without their red mantles). She was not subject to any monastic administration or supervision, and usually continued to live with her family; but there was an expectation that she would be less involved in the bustle of daily life and devote a good deal of time to prayer.

The life of even the 'country lama' was, in theory, humble, austere, and virtuous. The Lesser Vows (*Bag Sanvaar*) taken by the *gesel* consisted of seven laws (*chaaj*) in addition to the ten basic vows of the *ubshyn sahil*. The seven laws forbade a lama from sexual intercourse, drinking alcohol, gambling, trading, keeping guests overnight in the monastery, failing to report a guest's pack animal, and playing chess. The Great Vows (*Ih Sanvaar*) entailed an even more rigorous set of rules. Although the exact number of prescriptions contained in the Great Vows seems to have differed somewhat from place to place, there were commonly 250 regulations for a *gelüng*; even more, 348, for *chabganch*.[60] These included prohibitions on any displays of wealth or pride, such as dressing in expensive clothes, riding a fine horse, eating luxurious food, or having a grand home. The vows also governed personal deportment—it was forbidden to look a member of the opposite sex directly in the face, for example, or pick one's teeth in the view of others.

Despite these formally exacting standards, the reality was that by the late nineteenth century some regulations were routinely ignored by many, often in the highest positions. *Gegeens* sometimes had lavish lifestyles, a taste for alcohol, and several mistresses. Monasteries routinely organized trade and money-lending, from which they derived a large proportion of their incomes. Contemporary written sources speak of drunkenness, sex, violence, and theft within monasteries.[61] Although it was quite possible for talented commoners to work their way up to senior positions in the clergy, nepotism was not uncommon and top positions often went to the relatives of the powerful. However, it would be wrong to portray the system as entirely corrupt, as the communist regimes that came to control both Inner and Outer Mongolia tended to. Many of the most outspoken critics of the wealth and failings of the monasteries were themselves lamas,[62] and one of the Inner Mongolian

[54] *Zanggij-a*, classical transliteration.

[55] *Ubasin sakil*, classical transliteration. A man who has taken these vows can be called an *ubsh* (written *ubasi* in the classical script) a woman *ubsanch* (written *ubasanca* in the classical script), I was told that unlike the *chabganch* the *ubsanch* need not shave her head.

[56] Other versions of this term are *üzelch* (transliterated *yzelci* from old script) and *üzlegch*.

[57] This is not *gegeen*, the term for a reincarnation, but a title derived, I was told, from a Tibetan word for teacher. *Bagsh* is the Mongolian term for teacher.

[58] Written Ajusi, this is the name of a famous bodhisattva associated with long life.

[59] The term used in the account was *mörgöh* (to kowtow or worship), and by allowing this the lama granted a blessing—*morgön tahih*.

[60] There was also another term for Buddhist 'nuns', *gelenmaa*, which was, confusingly, used primarily to mean a young nun or female novice.

[61] Bawden (1968: 160–72). For a strongly negative account of Mongolian Buddhism see Gilmour (1893: 228–61).

[62] Such as Nagwanghaidav, Shijee, and Dandar, for example; see Bawden (1968: 170–2).

incarnations, Ishidanzangwangjil, wrote a well-known booklet in an attempt to raise moral standards.

By the early twentieth century there were also attempts by the political elite to reform the Buddhist religious establishment in Inner Mongolia. The increasing influence of new scientific and modernist perspectives began to undermine support for the faith at the highest levels, particularly among those who looked to the West and Japan for models of national development. These modernizers, such as Prince Gungsangnorbu, advocated tight restrictions on Buddhism which they began to consider superstitious and backward. In particular they advocated a reduction in the numbers of lamas, who they felt were an unproductive burden on the pastoral economy.[63] Several of the elderly pastoralists I knew, however, still had a much more positive view of the monastic system. They did not consider lamas to have been generally unproductive (although some individuals may have been lazy). For example, 74-year-old Damdin, whose two brothers had both been lamas, explained that in addition to performing religious duties, lamas often acted as doctors and vets, and that many of them were also administrators, skilled craftsmen, or pastoral specialists. They were widely respected by pastoralists, many of whom remained devout Buddhists. In the first half of the twentieth century much of the nobility also remained supportive of Buddhism, and when the Panchen Lama had to leave Tibet in the 1920s, Prince Demchügdüngrüb and other conservatives endorsed a wave of popular support for the exiled religious leader which led to a minor Buddhist revival among the Inner Mongolian elite.[64]

When the Japanese gained control in the east, however, they quickly reduced the number of lamas in the Mongolian regions they administered. Although they gave nominal support to Buddhism, so as to appeal to conservative Mongolians throughout the region, they removed the monastic privileges that made membership attractive to so many (in particular they made lamas eligible for military conscription). By 1938 there were only 29,000 lamas in the Japanese satellite state of Manchuguo, representing about 6 per cent of the male Mongolian population. In other parts of Inner Mongolia, however, the clergy continued to be very numerous. As late as 1943, for example, there were still more than 10,000 lamas in Shilingol league, representing more than 40 per cent of the total male population.[65]

Pastoralism before the Communist Era

The administrative structure and the pastoral economy were inextricably linked in the 'feudal' social order. Within the *hoshuu* herding families were

[63] Jagchid (1988: 234).

[64] The Ninth Panchen Erdeni, to use the more correct title, was forced to flee Tibet.

[65] Jagchid (1988: 235–7).

assigned to an administrative unit known as a *sum*, under an official called the *jangi* (in monastic districts, however, there was a different administrative unit, the *otog*).[66] The *sum* was theoretically composed of 150 households (although the actual number varied greatly) and was further subdivided into units of around fifty households, known as *hags* (or in some regions *gachaa*)[67] administered by a minor official. Within the *hag* families were grouped into sections of around ten households (*arban*), each with an official head.

The Qing emperor, through the banner prince, retained the formal right to allocate land. In everyday life, however, the right to use pastureland was at the discretion of the banner prince, and his officials,[68] who acted as custodians of both people and land. The territory of the *hoshuu* generally contained a number of different areas of pasture used in winter, spring, summer, and autumn. These seasonal pastures were divided between the various *sums* and *hags*, and within these areas of land the individual households had customary use-rights to particular pastures. In effect this meant that each family owned no land as such but had a recognized area of pasture that it used in the different seasons, and of these the rights to the exclusive use of the winter pasture (*öböljöö*) tended to be the most strictly enforced. Someone grazing their animals near another's winter site had to leave sufficient land untouched for the 'owner' to feed his animals over the winter months. The other seasonal pastures were not generally so firmly divided between households. In many cases the summer pastures for all the *sums* of the *hoshuu* were in the same general area, and the allocation of land was often very flexible, with few restrictions on exactly where families could camp.[69] There was generally no shortage of grass in the summer months, and relatively little harm could be done by infringing upon pasture customarily used by others in that season.

Not all families herded the same types of livestock or did so in the same way; some herders specialized in particular species of livestock, such as horses or camels. Under certain conditions herders would practise a more intensive method of grazing livestock called *otor*, rapidly moving their herds over good pastures, and this necessitated a good deal of flexibility in access to seasonal pastures. In the case of adverse climatic conditions in one area, arrangements were made for families (sometimes entire administrative units) to make use

[66] The *otog* seems to have been technically equivalent to the *hoshuu* (see Brown and Onon 1976: 795) However, some monastic districts were organized as banners (see Jagchid (1988: 165) and within these banners elderly informants said that the term *otog* was used to mean a sub-unit.

[67] *Gacag-a*, classical transliteration. Aberle (1962: 97) notes use of the term among the Daur in the republican period.

[68] It seems clear that it was the banner rather than the smaller divisions within it (such as the *sum* or the *hag*), that was the most important unit of pastoral land management. As an official letter dated 1877 stated 'the grass and water of a territory may be managed and assigned only by the ruler and *jasag* of the said land'. Cited by Natsagdorj (1967: 267) and referred to by Bawden (1968: 89).

[69] Natsagdorj (1967: 269) notes that in Outer Mongolia the summer and autumn pastures were generally utilized in common by the people of the *hoshuu* and not divided between *sums*.

of neighbouring areas of pasture. The division of pastureland between different families was a fairly loose one, marked by topographical features such as rivers and hills, and subject to renegotiation. The existence of such informal, but generally agreed, rights to land use remained largely unchanged until the establishment of agricultural Co-operatives and People's Communes in the 1950s.

The Chinese Communist government carried out an extremely detailed study of one Mongolian pastoral community in Alasha Left banner in the mid-1950s, this was later published in the *Mengguzu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* (*Social History Investigation of the Mongolian Nationality*, from now on referred to as the *MSLD*). One of the purposes of the study was apparently to determine whether or not the Mongolian population of the Alasha region could be given the 'autonomous status' of inclusion into the newly established Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region.[70] A condition for such inclusion was that the ethnic minority in question had abolished 'feudal' relations, and in the case of Alasha the study was conducted because it had not carried out socialist reform and pre-revolutionary social relations still largely persisted there.[71] As such the investigation provides a wealth of valuable material regarding the nature of pre-revolutionary economic and social organization. Although the study was carried out as a result of a Chinese Communist political agenda, it does not read like an intensely ideological document, and much of the picture painted by the *MSLD* is also in broad agreement with descriptions by elderly informants from other parts of Inner Mongolia.[72]

In the pre-revolutionary period banner princes, monasteries, and some powerful families, all tended to claim the exclusive right to use large areas of prime pastureland. For instance, it is reported in the *MSLD* that before communist control of the Alasha region the banner prince had exclusive rights to some fine pasture, close to good water sources, and this was managed by a servant.[73] He would drive off those found trespassing, or refer the case to the banner office if he considered it more serious. The *hutagt* of the local monastery also had pasture and *shabinar* (monastery serfs) to keep others off it. Banner officials, nobles who were related to the banner prince, and people who had gained favour with the prince by giving him rich presents, also laid claim to large areas of pasture.[74] However, wealth was constituted by livestock, not pasture *per se*; and unless they had more animals to graze many households had little need for a major change in land use. When the revolutionary reform policies were carried out in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the privileges of these nobles and monasteries had been abolished. However, as the authors of the *MSLD* report with dismay, the land used by each family remained almost the same as that of the pre-revolutionary period.

[70] Prior to this the Alasha Mongolians were organized into one autonomous prefecture and one autonomous banner, but these were included in the Chinese provinces of Ningxia and Gansu. These areas were included in IMAR around 1956.

[71] See the *MSLD*, 36.

[72] Academic Mongolian friends pointed out that such reports were generally conducted by local scholars, not necessarily by a team of committed communists.

[73] This man is referred to as an *albat* (one with duty), so he was certainly a commoner, however, it is not clear if he was a retainer or household servant of the banner prince Wang Yie.

[74] These arrangements were not seen as feudal privileges so much as the actions of a mean individual. This suggests that more popular patrons also had claims to pasture generally recognized. See the *MSLD*, 40.

Social Organization, Gender, and Concepts of Authority

In the description of pre-revolutionary pastoral society it is impossible to avoid the importance of paternalistic authority. Norms regarding appropriate behaviour bound both junior and senior kin, and also governed relations between non-kin of equal and unequal status. These obligations towards junior and senior relatives, patrons, clients, and friends, were central to the day-to-day operation of the pastoral economy, and were expressed in an idiom rooted in notions of kinship.[75]

Gender and seniority were key organizing principles, women were associated with activities within the home, particularly childcare and the preparation of food and clothing; men with activities carried out far from the encampment, such as distant herding. The senior men and women of the domestic unit (usually the parental couple) would dispose of matters in their own spheres of responsibility, and junior members of the household were expected to assist with tasks appropriate to their age and gender. In most formal contexts the father was considered to be the head of the family and steward of its property, but in his absence this status would generally pass to the mother until she felt one of the sons was sufficiently mature to take on the role.

The gendered division of labour was not inflexible, even in the pre-communist period. Women also rode horses and herded livestock, particularly when they were young, and there was no tradition of routine female seclusion. However, there were some skills that were associated almost exclusively with women, such as milking and sewing; while the killing of livestock, for example, was considered defiling for a woman, and was almost always done by men (usually laymen, as lamas also avoided slaughtering). Although it was more common for men to make journeys that involved leaving the family for a long period of time, women would also travel, often to local temples, for example, where they would meet and socialize with their other female friends and relatives.[76] As noted above, however, the sanga were

[75] An example of this is still found today in the use of the term *ah-diu* (which literally means older brothers and younger siblings) to indicate all the close family and friends of the same generation as oneself.

[76] For an eyewitness account of women gathering in this way see Gillmour (1893: 330).

almost entirely male, as were all the *gegeens*,[77] and the female *chabganch* usually stayed in the private domain of her own home and not the monastery. Women also had some ritual prohibitions to observe, such as not approaching the *oboo* itself, although (as described in Ch. 8) they would attend the *naadam* celebrations and sporting contests held nearby.

Public offices and posts in the Qing administration were almost always held by men. This did not mean, however, that women were excluded from affairs of state. Noblewomen were of a correspondingly high status as their office-holding husbands, and had a recognized role to play in the political culture of the imperial court (the wife of the ruler of a banner, for example, was kowtowed to by the subjects of the banner at *Chagaan Sar*—New Year –rituals, just as the ruler himself was).[78] Sometimes this role involved an emperor's wife assuming overall control of the state and ruling as regent after his death. Mongolia has a long tradition of such regents, dating back to Güyük's widow Oghul-Ghaimish who briefly ruled the vast Mongolian empire in the thirteenth century. (Indeed, the last really powerful Manchu sovereign was Cixi, the Qing empress dowager who ruled from 1861 until her death in 1908). A Mongolian mother, whatever her rank, exercised a certain amount of authority over her children, and was expected to advise and admonish them even when they were adults, as Chinggis Khan's mother Hö'elun did.[79] A woman generally brought a dowry with her on marriage, which remained hers and, as Humphrey argues, this amounted to inheritance of property by women.[80] In the case of noblewomen this dowry often included large numbers of serfs and their families, known as *inj* (the same term as for dowry). These remained her own servants and subjects, although they could be integrated with her husband's appanage, and traditionally they would follow her in the case of remarriage.[81] Some noblewomen, such as Altan Khan's widow Erketu Qatun, were so rich and powerful that they acted as kingmakers and *de facto* rulers.[82]

In the past a shaman could as well be female (*udgan*) as male (*böö*), but throughout much of Inner and Outer Mongolia Buddhism had driven such pre-Buddhist ritual practices underground where it had not eradicated them. An important position of exclusively female expertise and responsibility found throughout the region, however, was that of the midwife or *amarjihu-*

[77] There were tales of a girl *hutagt* who reincarnated in both male and female bodies, and who was the reincarnation of Chingunjav, a noble who led a rebellion against the Manchu in the eighteenth century. But this was a vaguely subversive figure, not a recognized *gegeen*. See Bawden (1968: 57).

[78] Aberle (1962: 32).

[79] See *The Secret History of the Mongols*, s. 244, Onon (1990: 135–7); Cleaves (1985: 176–8).

[80] Humphrey (1992: 185).

[81] The *Secret History* records that Chinggis Khan asked to be given half of the *inj* families belonging to one of his wives when she was remarried to another noble, and he speaks of the *inj* as her property: see Cleaves (1982: 150); Onon (1990: 116). (*Inj* is written *mgzi* in the classical script.)

[82] Erketu Qatun was married by three successive khans, the latter two because her support was essential to their chances of gaining the throne. A similarly rich and powerful princess was her rival, Dayicing-Beyiji. See Serruys (1974).

ulagch. This speciality also had some association with spiritual power, and in some regions the term for midwife had been the same as that for a shamaness.[83] Such women could become locally famous and be in constant demand, as Purevmaa, an 82-year-old woman in the district of Shine Barga Jüün *hoshuu* ('New Barga Left' banner) in Hulun Buir recalled:

> In the time when I was young, in our area there was a very famous midwife. If a woman's child is lifeless inside her it is very dangerous, the mother can die too. In that case the midwife would take the lifeless child out (with her thumbs).[84] She had her own small knife and she knew how to put her hand into the mother and make a cut so that she could get the lifeless child out. In this way she would save the life of the mother. Because of her the women of our area had safe births.

The pastoral residential unit was an encampment of round felt tents called *ger* (known as 'yurts' in English, from the Russian). This encampment, known as a *hoton*, *ail*, or *hot-ail*, could include anything up to a dozen *ger*s, but generally contained between two and seven. The household (those who shared a *ger*) varied in size, but was usually composed of a conjugal pair and their unmarried children. Parental households generally lived alongside the household of one (sometimes more) of their married sons. According to tradition, a daughter went to live with her husband's family after marriage, the youngest son should remain with the parents, and the older brothers could move away with a share of the parental herds upon marriage if they wished. (In practice, however, other arrangements were quite common, such as a parental couple living alongside the family of a daughter and her husband). Such stem families would often join other households to form larger encampments, particularly at the summer pastures. The constituent households were frequently linked by kinship relations, but in many cases the encampments included unrelated families. The arrangement was often seasonal, with the families returning to different winter pastures, where they might reside next to other households, and the membership of the group could also vary from year to year. The *hoton* itself should not be seen as a stable social group, but as the (often temporary) result of a continuous process—the manifestation of social relations in a residential form. These relations formed a flexible network, based largely on kinship, but also on dependency and friendship.

The herds of the constituent households were usually combined so that each family could benefit from the economy of scale gained by sharing pastoral tasks. Although there was some specialization, particularly when herding for the rich, most families herded several species of animals, but (except

[83] Mostaert's Ordos Mongolian dictionary records the word for midwife as *udugan*, see Lessing (1982: 861). Humphrey (1996: 322–3) discusses the occult powers associated with the status of midwife. The terms for midwife seem to vary somewhat from place to place. Humphrey uses the term *bariyachi* for midwife, while the one I encountered was *amarjihuulagch*. Jagchid and Hyer (1979) note the terms *idughan* (from *udugan*), and *kuisütu eej* ('mother who cuts the umbilical cord').

[84] The term she used was *am'gui hüühediig erhidj abdag*. To 'thumb-out' the 'child without life'.

for sheep and goats) the different species were kept in separate herds.[85] As large herds required little more supervision than small ones, pooling animals of the same species allowed the members of the encampment to reduce their total workload. Families retained the ownership of their livestock, however, and the characteristics of animals would be carefully memorized or the livestock marked so that it was clear which animal belonged to whom, and the herds could be separated again as necessary.

Some of the most detailed accounts of the historical *hoton*[86] were written by A. D. Simukov, who studied Outer Mongolian pastoralism in the 1930s. This was a period that compares rather closely with the situation in Alasha at the time of the *MSLD*, in that the revolutionary government had officially abolished the 'feudal' order, but the actual social relations in the pastoral regions were changing rather slowly. Simukov was able retrospectively to describe pre-revolutionary pastoralism, and study the underlying organizational forms that had remained after the official demise of the old order. He noted that the rich tended to join up with poor households to make use of their labour, and the poor were only too willing to herd for the rich as they had great difficulty living independently.[87] Simukov describes the senior figure who could usually be considered the head of each *hoton*, and who was characterized not only by being generally an older male, but also by being rich. Those households who camped together usually recognized this senior and referred to him using the term *ah* (a term used to mean elder brother, older male relative, or friend). These relations match those found in pre-revolutionary Inner Mongolian pastoral areas and resemble certain modern forms described in later chapters.

Those working directly for a wealthy family, under the owner's supervision, were usually termed *jarch*.[88] There were no fixed rates of remuneration for this but the servant family would get food, clothing, and other goods as deemed appropriate by the herd-owner. The dependency of the poor on these richer families was not just their need for sustenance; even if they could provide enough food for themselves they were often reliant on richer households for the use of draft animals and help in case of emergencies. This could be true of those who herded livestock for others as part of their own herd as well as *jarch*—pastoral assistants.

[85] Although most households owned a range of livestock species, there were also specialists who would look after large herds of certain animals (particularly horses) for their noble or monastic masters.

[86] Simukov (1933: 22) uses the term *hoton* which today is largely interchangeable with the term *hot-ail*. Simukov also mentions that the term *khot-ail*, was sometimes used, and I have used this term (*hot-ail*) when appropriate, as it is also used in Inner Mongolia today.

[87] Simukov (ibid. 29) noted that wealthy households preferred to have two or three poor households in their *hoton*, and that grouping in *hotons* on the basis of property equality was very uncommon.

[88] Written *zarts* in Cyrillic, and *zarci* in classical script.

To describe the nature of dependency of this sort I make use of the term 'patron-client relations', merely for want of a better one. Eisenstadt and Roniger maintain that, as a comparative device, we may conceptualize a number of different 'modes of structuring trust' in different societies.[89] Of these modes, patron–client relations can be taken to mean those in which the relationship is voluntary, informal, particularistic, and diffuse, based upon inequality between the parties, involving the exchange of combinations of different types of resource, generating strong obligations on both sides, and ideally, being rather unconditional and long-term. As such the term can be used to describe two types of relationship. The first is that between an official and someone who seeks and gains his or her support. This is, in some ways, comparable with the *guanxi* relations that may be formed between subordinates and superiors which Yang describes in her study of Han Chinese society.[90] As the administrative structure and political culture in Inner Mongolia have long been intermingled with those of China, it is perhaps unsurprising that Mongolian relations of patronage bear some resemblance to those among Chinese officials.[91] The second way in which I use the term 'patron–client' is to describe the relationship between a rich herdsman and someone who herds animals for him. These relations of social obligation do not have a single specific name in Mongolian, indeed the roles expected of parties in such a relationship can be thought of as part of what Bourdieu might term the cultural *doxa*—i.e. those elements of social thought that are taken for granted.[92] They are implicit in terms such as *darga* (boss or head), *ejen* (master/mistress or owner), and *yos* (manners or custom).

The relationship between a herd-owner and a client herder can be further differentiated into those which Ingold describes as pastoral 'assistantship' on the one hand and 'associateship' on the other. Ingold[93] characterizes the first subtype as a relationship between a herd-owner and an assistant who herds animals with him, in return for payment of various kinds; and this matches the usual role of the *jarch*. Ingold also notes the way in which the assistant can be incorporated into the master's household,[94] and this certainly could happen in Inner Mongolia too. The widespread occurrence of adoption, and the practice of a family's inclusion of a son-in-law, illustrates the flexibility of the concept of family membership. The boundary of the familial group was

[89] See Eisenstadt and Roniger (1984: 269).

[90] The word *guanxi* (meaning a relationship) is a Han Chinese term, frequently used in the context of social connections that can be used for mutual benefit, and these relationships are often created and supported by gifts, favours, and hospitality. Yang (1994: 76–7) describes rural relations of this kind and notes the need for peasant families to retain good relations with officials during the commune period. Elsewhere (ibid. 117–19) she also describes non-kin superior subordinate relations as one of the bases for *guanxi*.

[91] The importance of patrons and their networks in Han Chinese rural life in the pre-revolutionary period is described by Duara (1988: 160–93).

[92] Bourdieu (1977: 168).

[93] Ingold (1980: 190–1).

[94] Ibid. 185, 204.

a broad and permeable one. 'Associateship', on the other hand, involves the herd-owner distributing livestock to other households who manage them for him, and are paid with a portion of the produce.[95] This was a very common practice in pre-revolutionary society: nobles, monasteries, rich commoners, and local government would 'place herds' (*süreg tabih*) in this way.[96]

The norms associated with the position of *ejen* entail some obligations as well as rights; indeed, in a number of contexts the meaning of the term resembles that of the English word 'patron'. The most common use of the word is probably *geriin ejen*, the head of the household. It can also be taken to mean 'host,' and this indicates that the householder (as well as the guest) has an obligation to act in an appropriate way. The position of *ejen* entails a responsibility for one's subordinates—the phrase *ejen boloh* (to become an *ejen*) means to vouch for something or someone, or to take responsibility for them. This is the usage in which it most resembles our term 'patron', as someone who supports a junior.[97] The Mongolian term *ejengüi hüühed* (a child without an *ejen*), means an illegitimate child. The application of the metaphor of paternal kinship to social seniors that is implied by the English term 'patron' is not too inappropriate a translation of *ejen*—a concept of authority that includes both a senior sponsor and the family head. Both terms can be seen to involve an association between the authority of a social superior and that of a father, and these entailed obligations to help, as well as social seniority. The *MSLD* mentions a number of paternalistic relations between lamas and the poor pastoralists who herded their animals for them.[98]

Indeed, one of the highest-ranking Buddhist dignitaries in pre-revolutionary Inner Mongolia, the Kanjurwa *Hutagt*, described relations with subordinates in a characteristically paternalistic way. He represents Buddhist rulers as looking on their subjects as 'our children and grandchildren', and he stresses that superiors and subordinates 'served each other in many ways'.[99] Although the Kanjurwa *Hutagt*, who had been of pre-eminently high status, might be expected to present a positive description of 'feudal' relations, his views do offer an insight into the values of the pre-revolutionary elite. Aberle's analysis of pre-revolutionary Chahar society notes similar attitudes: 'a kinship ideology permeated the dealings of the *amban* (banner official) with his people . . . The *amban* was a "father" to his people'.[100]

[95] Ingold (1980: 190–1) 185.

[96] *Süreg tavih*, Cyrillic transliteration, to 'put out' or 'let out' a herd (*syryg talbiva*, classical transliteration).

[97] The term for a benefactor is *öglög ejen* ('donation master/mistress'), which parallels another aspect of the English word, as in 'patron of the arts'.

[98] *MSLD* 55–7.

[99] Hyer and Jagchid (1983: 62).

[100] Aberle (1962: 35, 53).

This patriarchal concept of authority underpinned both household organization and the pre-revolutionary feudal social order.[101] The link is illustrated by one of the Mongolian terms for feudalism, *ejen bool niigem* (master–serf society), and the term *ejen ish* meant a lord or feudal ruler. Although the term *ejen* was to some extent associated with masculinity in that those it described were generally men,[102] it is not itself an essentially gendered term. A female household head is also referred to as the *geriin ejen*, and an old name for the mistress of the house was *togoo tulgan ejen* (lit. pot and hearth *ejen*).[103] Adult men and women, then, could be considered *ejen*s where they exercised proprietorial authority over subjects appropriate to their social status and gender. As such the term represents a central theme in the construction of asymmetrical social relations, and one which applied to a series of social scales—from the Imperial to the domestic. The duties and obligations subjects owed their lords and, ultimately, the emperor were metaphorically modelled on those of the household. In a Foucaultian sense the relations of power contained in the notion of the *ejen* could be seen as 'the concrete, changing soil in which the sovereign's power is grounded, the conditions that make it possible to function'.[104] But the potential for the relation to be expressed in the exercise of power (as the term is generally understood)[105] was only one aspect of a multiplex social construct, one that entailed obligations and expectations on both sides.

Proprietorial authority was, however, so central to the notion of social order that to be masterless was to be wild or chaotic. The term *ejengüi baidal* (lit. a situation without an *ejen*) means 'anarchy'. This logic also applied to the spiritual world. The *gajryn ejed* (lit. *ejen*s of the land) are prayed to at the annual ceremonies held at an *oboo* (ritual cairn) and reflect the central role that notions of jurisdiction play in conceptualizing the environment. To ensure favourable conditions in a certain locality these spiritual 'owners' or masters of the land are propitiated to secure their good will. In the same way that officials in positions of power continue to be treated with deference and presented with gifts so that they will act as friendly patrons in time of need, the spiritual rulers of the land require similar dues.

Although asymmetrical in power, the various social institutions classified under the term patron–client relations generally entail norms of mutual

[101] It is interesting to note that there are certain similarities between such Mongolian notions and Confucianist concepts of social order. The term *achlal*, for example, not only means benevolence or benefaction, it also means filial piety.

[102] The term *gerin ejen* can also mean husband, for example.

[103] The term *tulga(n)* literally means 'trivet'—an iron support over the fire upon which a pot was placed (these are now very rarely used). However, the term could also mean the fireplace or hearth.

[104] Foucault (1980, 187–8).

[105] Weber's (1948: 180) definition of the term matches general usage well enough—'the chance of a man or of a number of men to realize their own will in communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action'.

solidarity between parties, friendly interpersonal sentiments, and mutual obligations. Such relations can offer a convincing account of the social organization of the Bayan Nuruun *bag* pastoral community studied by the *MSLD*. The authors of the study wrote that in their study area a number of families herded together, and considered this to be a form of 'collective herding'. If this assessment was widely made by cadres in Inner Mongolia it may account for the majority of Mutual Aid Teams deemed to have been established in the 1950s. In fact four out of the six such 'collective herding groups' that the *MSLD* studied might be better described as associations between several poor families and a relatively rich one, with one family owning several times as many animals as the others in the group, and some of the poorer 'associate' families owning too few animals to make a living from them alone.[106] The solidarity and close interpersonal relations between the members of these groupings seem to have been sufficient for the investigators to classify them as collaborative rather than exploitative arrangements.

The authors of the *MSLD* recognized, however, that the way that work was shared between all the households of a *hoton* irrespective of the number of livestock they owned, was a way for rich herdsmen to benefit disproportionately from the labour provided by the poorer households.[107] However informants' reports also indicated that the poorer families, who often did not own sufficient animals to move their own *ger*, would also benefit from the use of the richer families' camels, carts, and draught animals.

Informants who could remember pre-collective pastoralism stressed the multiplex nature of the relations between rich and poor households, who were sometimes related by ties of kinship. The authors of the *MSLD* also reported that payment to the poorer families was of an informal nature, with the clients (particularly assistants) often eating at the patron's home. Family relations, the authors of the report noted, were mixed with 'employer/employee' relations. The social organization of the *hoton* was not simply a reflection of the kinship system; it was highly flexible and frequently included affines, distant kin, and non-kin. Nor was it entirely a product of relations of economic dependency; the collaboration it entailed was often voluntary, and frequently came about because close kin or friends wanted to live and work together. It seems that the best way to describe this formation is in terms of the wider indigenous model of social organization based, in part, upon the familial roles of the domestic group.[108] This model of the division of roles and responsibilities considered 'natural' to the pastoral family was applied to the wider economic arrangements of the encampment. When extended outwards, beyond the circle of close kin, this model tended to generate clientelistic relations where there were marked asymmetries of power between the parties.

[106] An example of this was the typical cluster of families about a patron named Duan, described as a 'collective pasture group' in the report. Duan owned 133 'large animals' (camels, horses, and cows) 85% of the group's big animals. Duan owned 453 small animals (sheep and goats) which was 73% of the group's total. See *MSLD* 58–9.

[107] Humphrey notes a very similar type of arrangement was common among the Tuvinians in the early twentieth century. Humphrey (1980: 27–8).

[108] Vreeland (1962: 89) compares the relationship between a rich household and a servant family as 'in certain respects like the relationship between a father and his dependent son'.

For the herding family who did not own enough animals, but who still managed its own pasture, the preferred solution was to be entrusted with livestock belonging to some wealthy individual or agency. This customary institutionalized arrangement, called *süreg tabih* (to 'place a herd'), was used by monasteries and banner treasuries, as well as nobles and rich families. Lamas who were staying at the monasteries, and full-time banner officials also made wide use of this institution to provide an income and retain animals they did not look after personally. The institution of *süreg tabih* can be described as 'leasing out' livestock to a herding family who undertook its management. In return the herding family gained a proportion of the animal produce and offspring. A typical arrangement was for the herding family to take all the wool and milk of the herd, whilst the owner took ownership of all the offspring. Other agreements were less generous, with the owner taking all the wool and giving the herding family a goat and some kids in payment.

This herd placing was generally favoured when the owner of the animals could not organize the pasturing of the animals personally, and so delegated the day-to-day management of part or all of his herd to one or more other families. The arrangement reduced the material returns of the owner, however, because the herding family received a share of the animal products.[109] The banner prince of Alasha had over a thousand camels pastured in this way all over the banner, and only those in good relationship with the prince were fortunate enough to be entrusted with these valuable animals.[110] Generally the management of livestock under these conditions was greatly sought after.[111] To be the client of someone rich or powerful in this way often meant being relatively wealthy and influential oneself.

An alternative approach to the problem of herding large numbers of livestock (and one that was considered more profitable), was for the owner to retain management of the animals, but to increase his or her workforce. Having a large number of active children, particularly sons, has long been seen as advantageous for keeping big herds. When livestock was too numerous, or the domestic workforce too few, there were several common methods of extending the labour pool beyond the household members in the pre-collective period. In the case of a shortage of sons of their own, rich families might invite a son-in-law to stay with them to help manage the herds

[109] See *MSLD* 62. See also Vreeland (1962: 175).

[110] *MSLD* 63. The trust that this relationship required is also noted, ibid. 59, and the institution seems to constitute a 'mode of structuring trust', to use Eisenstadt and Roniger's term.

[111] *MSLD* (p. 60) gives the example of a poor lama who had gained the lease of a herd from a rich lama, and explained how this was considered better than working as a hired hand.

(*hürgen oroh*, 'son-in-law entry'). However, a man who joined his affines in this way could be referred to by the term *hüchnii hürgen*[112] which has somewhat servile connotations. Adoption was another common custom which could allow a pastoral household to match its domestic labour to its herd wealth.[113] In the pre-communist period the feudal retainers, (*har'yat* or *hamjlaga*) also represented increased labour for a noble family, allowing them to retain large herds under their own management.

Some owners preferred to manage valuable livestock themselves, with the help of pastoral assistants. Wealthy Inner Mongolian commoners did not have feudal privileges such as *har'yat* retainers to work for them. If they did not want to entrust their treasured horses or camels to *süreg* arrangements, and could not mobilize enough labour in other ways, they would often hire herders at a seasonal or monthly rate to do this important work.[114] The importance of hired help, and the commercial formality of the arrangements, were much greater where Han Chinese were concerned. In Alasha there had been an influx of Han Chinese prepared to do pastoral work, and the role they played in the pastoral economy in this region was interestingly different from that of most Mongolians. The *MSLD* notes that they were hired as pastoral assistants, usually for a short period, often at the busiest time of year such as the lambing season. Most of these temporary workers, paid in cash or animals, were Han Chinese; very few were Mongolian. In the past the hiring of such labourers had been unusual, the report notes, but had become relatively common practice among the richer pastoral families by the 1950s. In the Shilingol and Hulun Buir banners that I studied, however, there had been few Chinese living there at that time. It seems that where they had immigrated to pastoral regions, the Han workers were not generally incorporated into the web of interpersonal relations of the Mongolian community, but dealt with on a more purely commercial basis as a relatively impersonal source of labour. They were widely considered harder workers than Mongolians, and it was noted that Han labourers always settled on a price for the jobs, whereas amongst Mongolians before 'liberation' (the official term for the Chinese Communist takeover) payment was almost never discussed. Unlike most Mongolians, working for relatives or neighbours, it seems that the self-employed Han labourers could drive a hard bargain for their services and discharge all their obligations in a purely formal business deal.[115]

[112] Meaning 'labour' son-in-law or 'force' son-in-law, i.e. a son-in-law who works.

[113] *MSLD* (p. 55) notes that of forty-seven families studied there had been eighteen adoptions in the previous 40 years, usually by families that wanted to increase their domestic workforce.

[114] Small animals (sheep and goats) were usually herded for them by other families under *sureg* arrangements.

[115] See *MSLD* (pp. 42–8). The authors also noted the increasing use of such hired labour was changing the relations between Mongolians; making them more commercial in their dealings with one another. The Han were also hired by richer Mongolians to build houses and wells, tasks that were unpopular among Mongolians. Accounts indicate that when they had to, Mongolians generally herded

It would be naïve, however, to imagine that relations between rich and poor Mongols of pre-revolutionary pastoral relations were entirely benign. The powerful and rich were generally in a position to exploit the poor and those of low status if they wished to; and adopted children were sometimes treated as unpaid servants by their foster families who had often obtained the child in exchange for a payment of some kind.[116] Despite the various ways in which rich and poor may have often enjoyed co-operative and close relations, there is no doubt that there were enormous differences in wealth among pastoralists before collectivization. My informants could not give me much statistical information about the pre-revolutionary economy, but the *MSLD* includes a wealth of such material. It provides us with a unique amount of detailed data on the pastoral economy of the time and an insight into the workings of pastoral Mongolian society immediately before the introduction of Co-operatives and People's Communes.

Pre-Collective Livestock Ownership

The authors took as a subject of special study the forty-seven pastoral households contained in the small administrative unit of Bayan Nuruun *hag*,[117] detailing their livestock holdings in 1948 and 1957, and these have been used to draw the graphs at Figs. 2.1 6. Even in this small community there were wide differences in the number of livestock owned by the various households. In 1948 twelve households owned less than 50 animals, and the richest had more than 400.

As can be seen from Fig. 2.1, the most numerous species of livestock in the district was goats, followed by sheep, and then camels. This is in keeping with the semi-desert conditions of the Alasha region, where pastoralists keep goats and camels in larger numbers than in less arid regions of Inner Mongolia. The wide differences in wealth shown above were found throughout Inner and Outer Mongolia, however.[118] Vreeland's (1962) study of the much less arid region of Chahar, in present day Shilingol *aimag*, includes figures for the livestock ownership distribution of the twenty-four households that lived in the small Mongolian district of Üci Oboo around 1930.[119] Figure

livestock for the owner, usually over a long period of time, rather than being hired for a few weeks or months. A few Han did seem to have been incorporated into the Mongolian 'moral economy' through marriage; and *MSLD* (p. 56) notes a case of this. After marrying the adopted daughter of a rich Mongolian family, a hired Han herdsman stopped being paid for his work, but continued to herd livestock as a dependent of the foster-family of his wife.

[116] Ibid. 56.

[117] *Bajan Nirugun hag*, classical transliteration.

[118] For comparable wealth distributions and relations of dependency in Outer Mongolia see Simukov (1936: 47–52), and Vreeland (1962: 31).

[119] Vreeland (1962: 144) gives the wealth brackets in these three types of livestock for the richest four households, the next richest six, the intermediate four households, and the poorest ten. He also gives the total number of livestock in each category. I have assigned a livestock holding to each of the twenty-four households so as to match the distribution and the overall totals—although the sheep

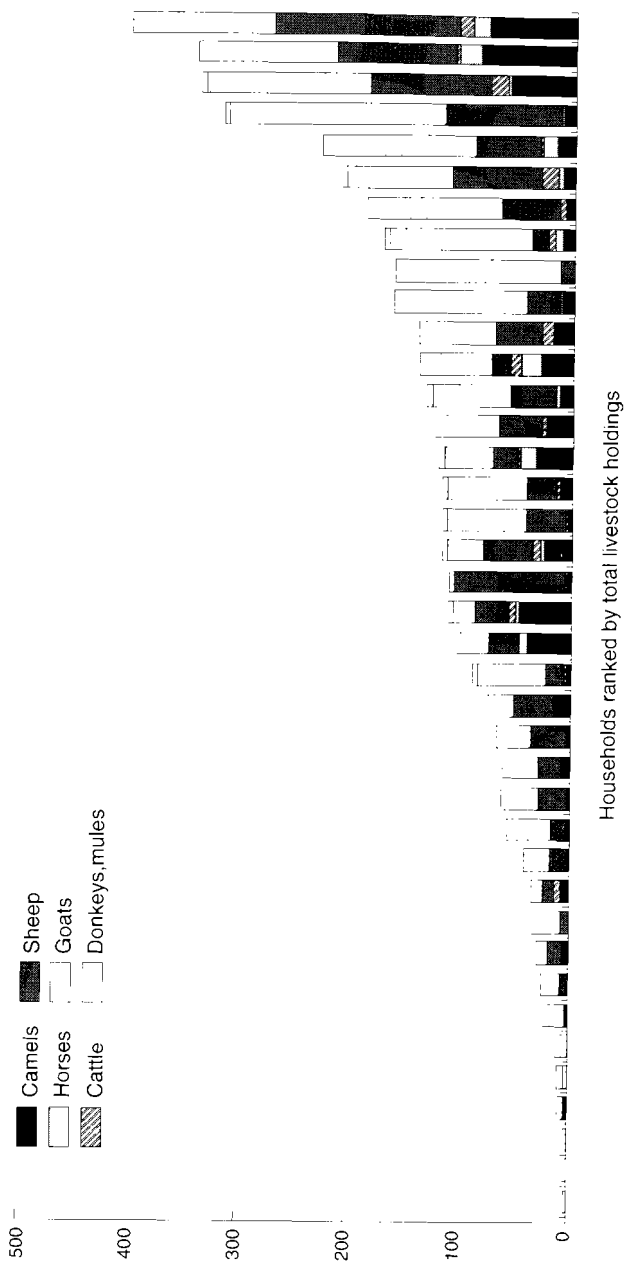


Fig. 2.1 Livestock ownership of households in Bayan Nuruun *bag*, 1948

2.2 has been drawn using estimates based on these figures, and shows, if anything, an even more unequal distribution of livestock than in 1948 Bayan Nuruun *bag*.

The much more detailed data provided by the *MSLD* allows us to track the fortunes of individual families in Bayan Nuruun *bag* up until the eve of collectivization. The number of households in the *bag* (district) increased from thirty-nine in 1948 to forty-seven in 1957.[120] Over the intervening nine years there had also been a rapid increase of livestock numbers in the district (and throughout Inner Mongolia), as the pastoral economy recovered from the ravages of wars. The overall increase in the numbers of livestock (as measured in sheep units) was an impressive 84 per cent. Although the total number of livestock had increased rapidly, the distribution of this wealth changed very little between 1948 (before communist administration of the region),[121] and 1957, on the eve of collectivization.[122] The pie charts at Figs. 2.3 and 2.4 show the percentages of the total livestock in Bayan Nuruun *bag* that were owned by three different sections of the population; the richest 25 per cent (ten households in 1948 and twelve in 1958), the poorest 25 per cent of the households, and the remaining half of the sample who owned an intermediate number of animals. In order to be able to compare the different species of livestock I have calculated the livestock owned by each household in terms of standard sheep units.[123]

In 1948 the richest quarter of the households owned 60.4 per cent of all the livestock in the district, while the poorest quarter of the families owned a miserable 3.6 per cent of the total. Despite the advent of communist administration, the chart for 1957 (Fig. 2.2) shows the distribution of livestock hardly changed in the intervening nine years.[124] The twelve poorest families had a slightly larger share of the livestock holdings (4.8 per cent) in 1957 than the ten poorest in 1948, but some of this was due to local officials giving several of the very poorest households a few dozen sheep and goats by way of government aid. The richest twelve families, however, still owned about 60

totals (which I take to include goats) are about 15% higher than the figure Vreeland's informant gave, they are as close as I can make them while matching the overall wealth bands he specifies.

[120] The authors use the Chinese term for household, but note that the members may live in two yurts. It might be more precise to use a more clumsy term such as the 'domestic group' or 'residential family unit', but in my opinion it is permissible to use 'household' provided the nature of pastoral accommodation is recognized. This domestic group is usually composed of a nuclear or stem family.

[121] Alasha, in the West of Mongolia, came under effective communist control later than the more easterly parts of Inner Mongolia.

[122] In 1957, five of the poorest households owned less than 50 animals, while the richest household had over 700.

[123] I used the Mongolian method of calculating sheep units. This gives sheep a value of 1, goats 0.8, cattle 5, horses 6, and camels 7. See Mongolian Academy of Sciences (1990: 108).

[124] The average livestock holding per household was 227 sheep units in 1948 and 357 in 1957; in both cases 62% of the households owned less than the average.

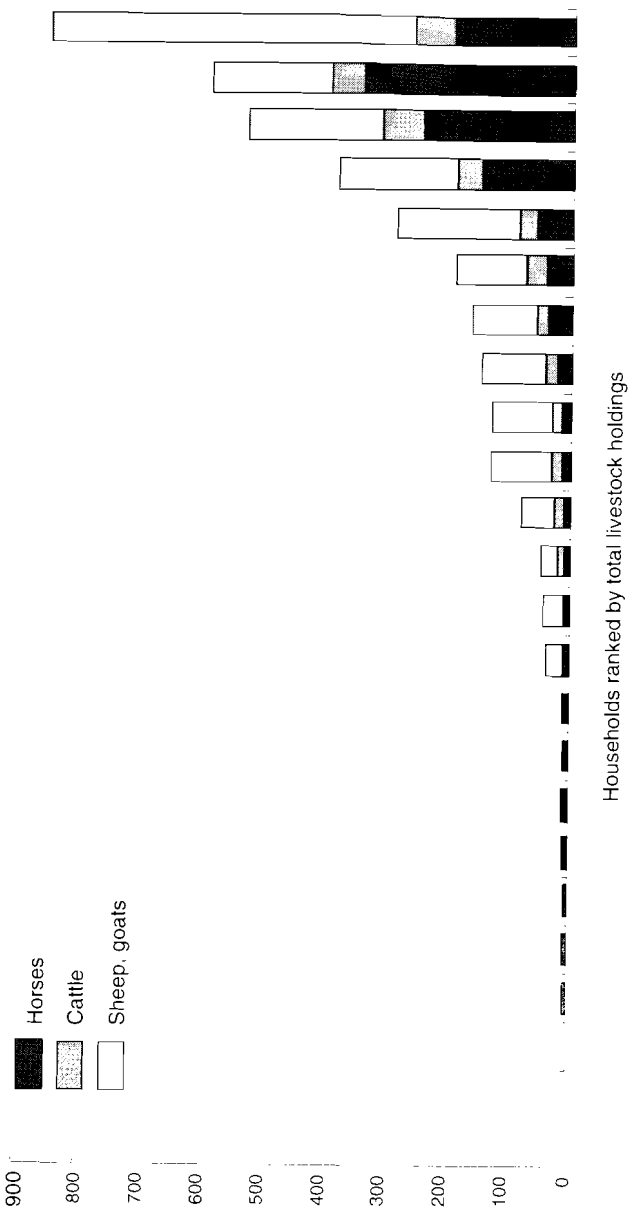


FIG. 2.2 Estimated livestock ownership of households in Lei Obao, Chahar, 1930

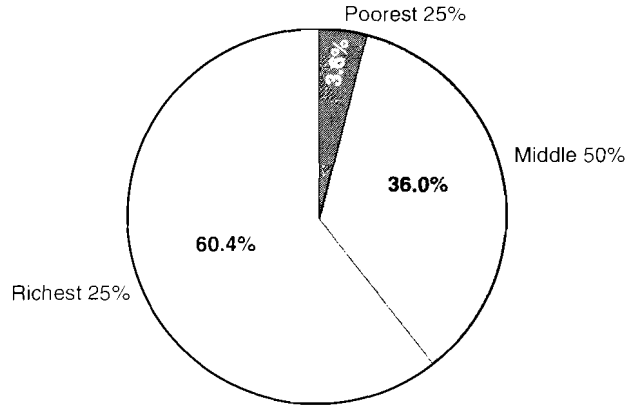


FIG. 2.3 Percentage of district livestock owned by wealth group, 1948

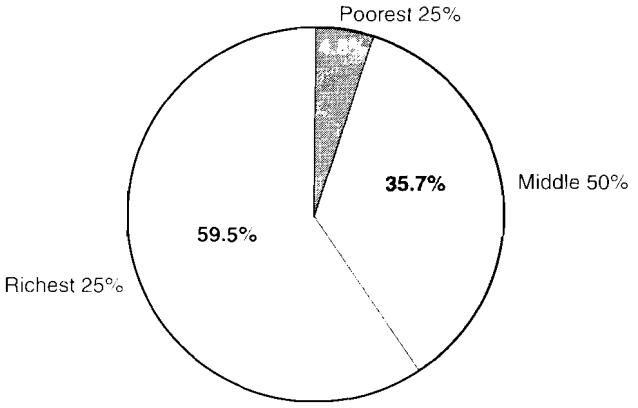


FIG. 2.4 Percentage of district livestock owned by wealth group, 1957

per cent of the livestock of the district, and the remaining twenty-three households continued to own about 36 per cent of the total.[125]

This suggests that the Inner Mongolian pastoral system did not tend to generate an equality between households, even with the removal of the official feudal structures and aristocratic privileges. This inference contrasts with the model of East African pastoralism proposed by specialists such as Dahl, who have argued that the ecological constraints on the accumulation and

[125] This suggests that the wealth distribution was rather different than that implied by Liu and Zheng (1983: 355) who described huge livestock holdings in the hands of a tiny minority, with the not extremely rich, but still well-to-do, 20% of the population owning a modest 30–40% of the livestock. As Liu and Zheng give no more details it is difficult to evaluate this account, but it is in keeping with their general approach, which is to portray only the very top of the Mongolian feudal elite as exploiters and to downplay inequality between other pastoralists.

transmission of pastoral wealth tended to level inequalities in the ownership of livestock over time, and prevent stratification--'the traditional mode of production of the East African pastoralists did not allow large scale inequalities to occur'.[126] Despite some redistribution of livestock to the poorest households by the local administration, however, in this Inner Mongolian case there seems to have been little if any tendency for the inequality in livestock ownership to decrease over time, and the overall distribution of livestock ownership seems to have been relatively stable.[127] This does not mean that the wealth of all pastoral families remained entirely constant over time. Some poor herders were able to build up slowly a moderate herd of their own by working for others.[128] Furthermore, the pastoral domestic group also tended to proceed through an economic cycle; an accumulation of animals as the family increased in size, and then a division of this wealth between sons as they married. These new, younger families with smaller herds began the cycle anew.

It is clear, however, that differences between rich and poor were not primarily the result of household groups being at different stages in their domestic cycles, although it appears that this process had some influence on livestock holdings. Looking at Fig. 2.5 we can see that many households had changed their relative wealth ranking between 1948 and 1957; however, the majority of households remained in their broad wealth brackets. Discounting the eight 'new' households that were not existent in 1948, we can observe that eight of the ten poorest households and seven of the ten richest households in 1948 were still in these wealth categories in 1957. If the additional households are included, and the size of the wealth bracket modified for the two periods, it is apparent that eight of the richest ten households in 1948 were among the richest twelve in 1957, and six of the poorest ten in 1948 were among the poorest twelve households in 1957. This indicates that wealth differences between families tended to persist over time, and it is also clear that rich families were much better able than the poor to provide their offspring with a large herd on marriage.

[126] See Dahl (1979: 280); Dahl argues that equality is a result of the ecological constraints of pastoralism; 'a pastoral society like the Borana has been able to maintain over time a kind of relative internal equality between households' (ibid. 279).

[127] Indeed, despite the influence of the communist administration, if the rate of change in herd wealth shown over the nine years from 1948 to 1957 were to continue it would take over 500 years for the livestock holdings of the richest 25% of the population to become equal to that of other households of the district.

[128] This is also mentioned in *HSLD* 42–3. A man named Tomor migrated to the area with his wife in 1931 with 10 camels. In 1949, after working for other people for 18 years, he had accumulated 100 goats, stopped working for others and 'began managing his own pasture'. However, 10 camels represents a considerable capital asset beyond the dreams of the poorest families. It also suggests that the *HSLD*'s authors' statement that a hired herdsman could accumulate 15 to 20 goats a year is exaggerated. Tomor, with his own income from camel hair and possibly transportation fees, could only accumulate about 5 goats a year.

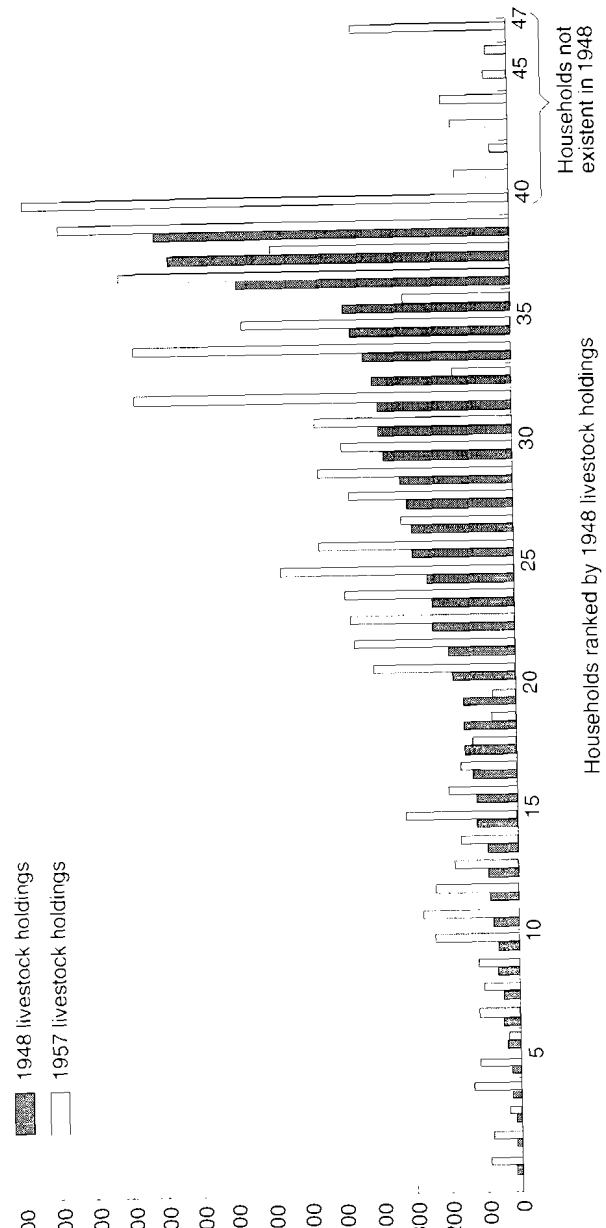


FIG. 2.5 Livestock ownership of households (in sheep units) in 1948 and 1957

The large number of livestock that the son of a rich household was likely to start out with was not the only advantage that he enjoyed. Access to pasture was dependent upon three structural considerations, all of which would tend to favour the wealthy pastoralist. The first was good relations with the political authorities who ultimately assigned pastureland. In the pre-communist period noble families gained an immediate advantage in this respect, as did those who acted as minor officials. The second was animal wealth, so that large herds tended to gain priority in grazing disputes with smaller ones; and the third was simply the customary use of particular areas of seasonal pasture, generally passed from father to youngest son. The importance of the first two principles is demonstrated by the recorded case of a lama with a large herd pushing other herding families off their winter pastures. The explanation for this was that he had more animals and good relations with a local official.[129]

It should be noted that one of the difficulties with the approach used in the *HSLD* is the artificial separation of households,[130] as if each was an entirely independent economic unit. In fact inner Mongolian pastoral households were, and still are, part of strong networks that supply goods and services to friends and kin. The use of horses, and other important assets, could be obtained in a variety of informal ways as discussed earlier. Having noted the permeability of the 'household' as a unit of analysis, however, the data are still useful. The study shows, for example, that the twelve households with the most livestock (the wealthiest 25 per cent of the district) had a disproportionate interest in horses. They owned 74 per cent of the horses in Bayan Nuruun *hag* in 1957, but 54 per cent of the other species of livestock. The poorest 25 per cent of the households of the district owned very few horses indeed, just six animals between twelve households, which amounted to 2 per cent of the horses in the district.[131] This pattern of ownership becomes interesting in the light of the high status that has traditionally been attached to horses in Mongolian society. It begs the question as to whether they were an expression of wealth, the things a rich family was recognized by and respected for, or whether ownership of horses somehow helped a family to raise and maintain a large herd. The answer is, I think, that they served to do both. As well as providing high status as the traditional possession of a wealthy man, horses were almost essential for herding livestock over the

[129] *HSLD* 40.

[130] The authors use the Chinese term for household, but note that the members may live in two yurts. It can be taken to mean a family – usually a nuclear or stem family – residential unit.

[131] There also appears to be some relationship between income and the ownership of horses. The thirteen families whose annual income exceeded about 1,000 yuan owned 80% of all the horses (and 63% of the camels) in Bayan Nuruun *hag*. This section of the community constituted 27% of the number of families, and owned 54% of the total numbers of livestock. These families hired much more labour than less wealthy households, with an average cash outlay of 108 yuan per family on hired help.

long distances involved in Inner Asian pastoralism. Horses not only served the family that owned them, allowing them to cope more easily with large herds, but could also provide a service that poorer households needed, increasing their incentive to collaborate with the owners.

Another important reason for keeping horses was (and still is) that the highly valued drink *airag* is made from mare's milk. This delicious alcoholic drink has a high status in Mongolian culture, and its importance is a powerful traditional motive for a family to want to keep mares. Racing horses at the annual *naadam* games has remained an extremely important recreational and prestige activity, particularly for mature men (who generally train the horses), and the children of both sexes who ride them. Owning champion steeds remains a major source of satisfaction and esteem for a pastoral family. Horses do not, however, generally contribute as much to the family's direct income as sheep, goats, or cattle—producing no wool and little milk—but they do contribute to the household's wealth indirectly. The fact that horses are expensive, and provide little direct income, also helps concentrate them in the hands of those who have large herds.

It is not easy to breed and raise horses successfully, particularly for the poor. Traditional Mongolian horse-raising makes use of the economies of scale involved in keeping one or more stallions, each of which controls a number of mares and geldings, allowing herders to oversee groups of horses rather than individuals. Ideally, horses are used for riding by taking them out of the herd, being ridden for a number of days, and then returning them to the herd to recuperate. Horse herds are very mobile, often moving a long way from the encampment. Monitoring horses generally requires at least one horseman; whilst rounding up and exchanging steeds is best done with several. It is difficult, then, viably to raise small numbers of horses independently, and without recourse to another herd from which to draw steeds.

The importance of the horse to the steppe elite has a long history. Horses are found alongside the other treasures of important persons in Pazyryk burials dating from several hundred years BC.[132] In the Chinggisid and Qing periods, Mongolian aristocrats owned enormous herds of horses, kept for them by specialists.[133] In pre-modern history such herds were prime military assets, allowing the lords of the steppe to supply their highly mobile cavalry with numerous mounts. However, horses were also a key economic resource, and those who owned large numbers were clearly in a good position to organize productive activities, as well as waging war. The mobility that the horse provided made it politically important even in the modern period. During the

[132] The Pazyryk were a pre-Mongolian steppe culture thought to have lived in the region of the Altai mountain range. See Polosmak (1994: 80–103).

[133] Ibn Battuta, the remarkable fourteenth-century Moroccan traveller, noted the many Mongolian nobles who owned thousands of horses on the southern Russian steppes, see Spuler (1972: 183). Specialist horse herders are mentioned in the *Secret History of the Mongols*.

collectivization of the Buryat Mongolian population in the USSR, the Soviet authorities banned the private ownership of horses, so as to restrict the freedom of movement of the locals.[134] Another factor that may have contributed to the general importance of horses in Mongolia is their survivability. I was told by herdsmen that I knew that in the periodic winter disasters that limit herd sizes and can halve the number of animals at a stroke, horses tend to survive better than other animals, as they can dig through snow to find grass beneath, whilst cattle and sheep cannot.[135] Horses may represent a more secure form of wealth than other animals, and wealth tied up in horses would be relatively likely to be retained over time.

The *MSLD* also shows that in Bayan Nuruun *hag*, access to cash had remained as unequal as the ownership of animals (see Fig. 2.6). Some of the poorest households earnt less than 200 yuan in 1956 and the income of one household exceeded 3,000 yuan. However, although there is clearly a general relationship between the cash income of the households and the number of livestock they owned, they are not as closely linked as one might expect. One of the reasons is that in this region most households supplemented their income from livestock by participating in the local trade in salt. It should also be remembered that a great deal of household income was not realized in cash, and the statistics take no account of all the milk, meat, and other livestock products consumed within the home.

It is clear from the tiny numbers of livestock they had that many of the poorest families simply could not survive on the proceeds of their herds alone.[136] Throughout much of pastoral Inner Mongolia, however, there were relatively few opportunities for pastoralists to supplement their income from other activities such as the trade in salt carried out in this district of Alasha.

Given that the households with the lowest numbers of domestic animals could not have subsisted without additional income of some sort, and that some households had more animals than they could comfortably herd using

[134] C. Humphrey, personal communication (1995.

[135] This was what I was told by Baatar and other informants. However, both Hulun Buir and Shilingol have more winter snowfall that the more arid area of Alasha, where the *MSLD* study was conducted, and so this may not have been an important consideration there.

[136] In 1957, nine households had less than 100 sheep units, and fourteen had between 100 and 200. I take the minimum number of animals needed for a family to subsist at this time as 100 sheep and goats (or the equivalent), a figure suggested by the authors of the *MSLD* (p. 42). The minimum herd necessary for subsistence is related to the maximum sustainable rate at which animals are consumed or sold. Chang (1933: 83) gives an extremely optimistic estimate for the maximum annual off-take from a herd (25% each year). This is almost certainly too high, however. Hao Fan (1987: 320) notes that the proportion of livestock that was sold or consumed in Shilingol league in 1983 reached an unprecedented high at 24.3% – much higher than the level considered normal for the past 30 years, which was around 15%. Considering the improvement of winter-feed and veterinary care in the commune period, it seems reasonable to assume that average pre-revolutionary off-take rates were no higher that 15%. Jagchid and Hyer (1979: 297) offer a more conservative estimate of 10% based on Jagchid's personal experience as an administrator in Shilingol before communist control. By this estimate a family with 100 sheep and goats would only be able to sustain its herd if it slaughtered or sold less than one animal a month, more than this and it would soon have no livestock at all.

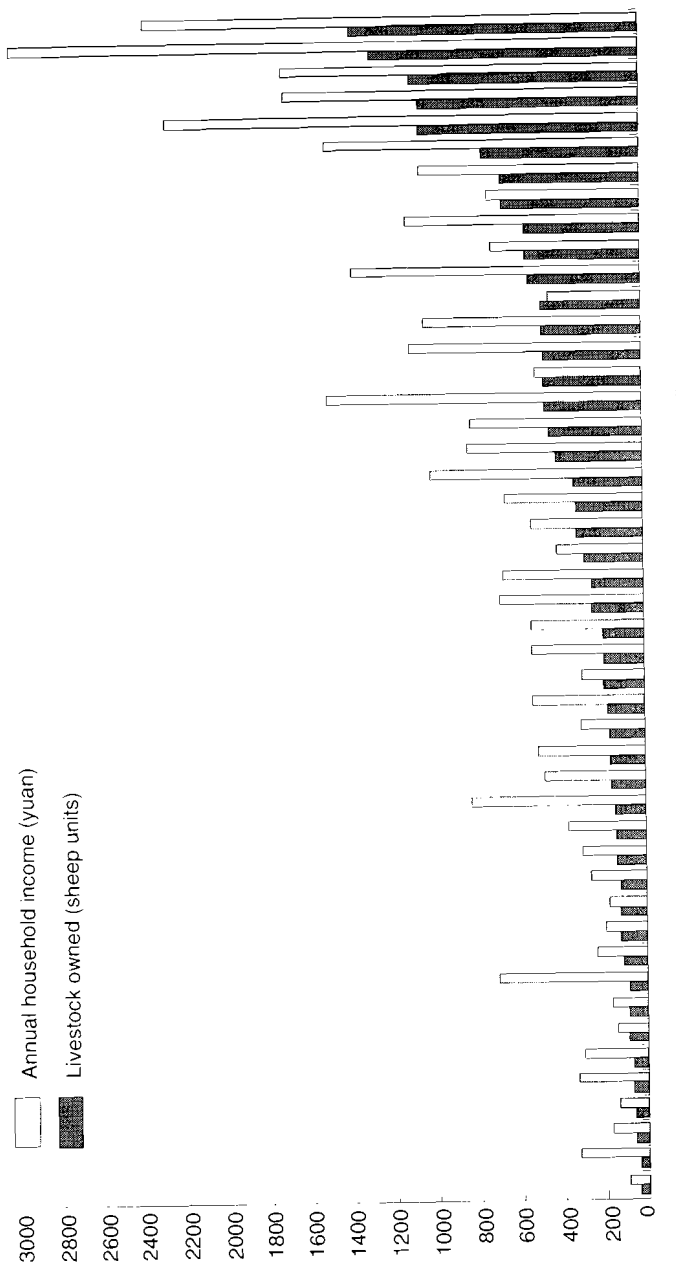


FIG. 2.6 Cash income in 1956 and livestock ownership of households in 1957

solely their own domestic labour, we can see the economic underpinnings of the pre-revolutionary social relations between senior and junior households in the *hoton* groupings. It seems possible, for the purposes of analysis, to introduce three heuristic categories. First, there were those households whose low number of livestock necessitated some form of support from others, and are likely to have been 'clients', herding animals belonging to others. Secondly, there were those who had sufficiently high numbers of animals that they were in a position to be 'patrons' making use of the labour of others, and were likely to act as such because the number of livestock was considerably more than could easily be kept using their domestic labour alone. Thirdly, there were those households with sufficient livestock and enough domestic labour to herd their animals and were unlikely to become economic patrons or clients in this model.

The model suggests that it was generally the poor herder who most needed associations of the sort described above. Many middle-income households would have been in a position to collaborate with rich herd-owners or manage some of their livestock for them, so the herd-owner had a large number of possible solutions to the problem of having too many animals. Although only a few owners were likely to have been rich enough to have more animals than they could herd themselves, there were generally always a number of households who would welcome the opportunity of herding more livestock in return for produce. The *MSLD* mentions poor herders asking their rich friends and relatives to make *sureg tabih* arrangements with them. Although five households are listed as having received livestock to herd for others, there were only three owners who acted as donors in such herd placing.[137] This suggests that rich owners were being approached by several poorer households, and some owners divided the livestock available for herd placing between different clients.[138]

Alongside the customary working arrangements in the *hot-ail*, there is also evidence of more formal payments for labour. The six richest households all hired labour, whereas very few of the poor did.[139] It seems that most of these formal payments were for short-term hired help and went to Han Chinese labourers, but some payments were being made to Mongolians too, since many of the poorest families were recorded as having received substantial payments from others. Such financial measurement took no account of the

[137] *MSLD* 62–3. The report presents a confusing account at times. It notes that five families received animals from three rich owners under *sureg* arrangements, but later classifies only three households under the *sureg* category. This seems to be because the authors have included a total of seven households in the category 'collective pasturing' which seems to be their term for stable *hoton* groups. They have then discounted internal arrangements within the cluster from their count of other relationships.

[138] There were sometimes shortages of seasonal pastoral assistant labour, however: see *MSLD* 36.

[139] These six spent an annual average of 186 yuan on hired help. Of the twenty-three families who owned 200 sheep units or less, all but three hired no labour at all.

labour the rich gained through informal arrangements, but it seems that even within the Mongolian community, labour was increasingly being hired on a formal basis, and the communist administration had established 'fair wages' for hired herdsmen. These were set at 15, 18, and 22 yuan per month, depending upon the nature of the work.[140]

The richest section of the pastoral population, such as the six wealthiest households (who all had more than 700 sheep units of livestock), do seem to have needed poorer families to help herd their livestock, either as pastoral assistants or associates.[141] Many of the poorest pastoralists (such as the sixteen households in Bayan Nuruun *bag* who owned less than 150 sheep units of livestock), owned so few animals as to make it very likely that they should seek the benefits of working for, or with, wealthier households.[142] The remaining twenty-five families (owning between 150 and 700 sheep units each) hired some seasonal labour, but relatively little, (payments amounting to an annual average of 49 yuan per family). It seems likely, then, that this group of households were largely self-sufficient in the sense that they could subsist without herding livestock for richer families, and could generally manage their own animals unaided.[143]

Pastoral Economics and Social Relations

A pastoral family, be they rich herd-owners or poor dependents, lived in a network of continuously exchanged goods, services, and status markers. They took care to stay on good terms with the temporal authorities to ensure security and access to grazing land. They also sought to retain good relations with the spiritual authorities, as the health, fertility, and safety of the family and its livestock could be affected by spirits. Similar techniques were used to retain amicable relations with spiritual entities as with temporal ones. Gifts formed a central part of these relations, and offerings to lamas, temples, and monasteries were ubiquitous. In day-to-day pastoral life, if someone made use of another's horse or camel the owner was usually repaid by a gift such as a *hadag* (ceremonial silk scarf) or bottle of alcohol.[144] Correspondingly, the

[140] *MSLD* 54.

[141] The maximum herd size that a herding household can comfortably manage alone varies greatly with the size and nature of the family, and the species of livestock they have. Personal experience confirms the observation made by Jagchid and Hyer (1979: 298) that an average household of four to five persons has sufficient labour to manage 40–50 large animals (horses or cattle) and 300–400 sheep and goats. This amounts to around 700 sheep units, and it seems reasonable to expect that households with more than this are likely to seek additional labour.

[142] Of these sixteen, nine households owned fewer livestock than the estimated 100 sheep units that I have taken as a minimum for subsistence. Although the remaining seven had between 100 and 150 sheep units they were still so poor as to have an almost certain need for additional income.

[143] *MSLD* (p. 36) notes that twenty-six households were independent of 'employee relations' and it seems that the rest were involved in a complex web of relations, including *sureg*.

[144] Ibid. 60.

oboo ceremonies were (and are) characterized by offerings of the same sorts of objects that are considered appropriate gifts. Gifts to officials, in return for official appointments and access to land, are specifically mentioned in the *MSLD*[145] and today in Mongolian society gifts are still frequently exchanged and used to gain favour with officials. Social etiquette and religious ritual, then, used related ceremonial languages to express obligation and respect in asymmetrical relations between juniors and seniors.

Much of the asymmetry stemmed from ownership of livestock. Adoption, and the giving of children to the monasteries, reflected a recurrent principle in pastoral Mongolian society—that the membership of social formations was structured by patterns of ownership. When there was an imbalance between the herd wealth of an agency and its available labour, institutions could be used to redress the imbalance. The *süreg tabih* (herd placing) arrangement was one such mechanism, as was the inclusion of a son-in-law by households short of labour, and the giving away of infants by the poor to rich families and monasteries.

In a pastoral economy in which ownership of animals and their offspring is inherited by household-sized units and unmodified by any redistributive mechanism, something resembling the three basic positions I have described as (1) dependent; (2) self-sufficient pastoralist; and (3) patron, would seem to be almost inevitably generated. Variations in natural conditions, in family fortunes, in the outcome of military and political conflicts, will result in some families having herds too large for their domestic labour power; and some families having such small numbers of animals that they must find work with richer neighbours. It must also follow that some families have sufficient labour power to look after their herds, and are neither clients nor patrons. This simple model cannot, of course, give any indication of the relative sizes of these categories, or the nature of their relationships, but it does suggest that some comparable form of pastoral dependency is likely to have been existent for a long time in pre-revolutionary Mongolia.

This approach suggests that the feudal relations can be viewed as formalizations of long-standing elements of Mongolian pastoralism. We could see the three categories of (1) dependent clients; (2) self-sufficient pastoralists; and (3) patrons, to be mirrored in the three feudal status positions of (1) *hamjlaga* or *har'yat*, formally dependent upon their masters; (2) *ard* or *albat*, economically independent but with duties; (3) *noyod*, nobility.

It may be that the families involved in the Alasha investigation actually represented the remains of the three feudal categories, and this is certainly likely to be true at the extremes of poverty. Some of the poorest pastoralists were almost certainly ex-serfs, and some of the richest families had probably been nobles (although this is not mentioned in the *MSLD*). But it seems that these

[145] *MSLD* 37.

dependent relationships operated throughout the social strata, and were not restricted to relations between commoners and aristocrats even in the Qing period.[146] I was told of poor *taij*s who worked as hired herdsmen for technically lower-status commoner families. Some *har'yat* of wealthy nobles were themselves extremely rich, having been entrusted with large herds by their masters. The feudal political order did not suppress the various pastoral processes that could generate dependency. Like all models the feudal paradigm was an imperfect match with reality, and as time passed the vagaries of pastoralism continued to throw up new rich men; while noble families without posts in government could become poor. Although the ruling Mongolian elite were generally successful at retaining great pastoral wealth over long periods of time, they could not ensure that all their noble descendants would remain rich.

The feudal social order, for all its rigid hierarchy, supplied formal obligations for both masters and servants, and social superiors had ideally, if not in practice—a nominally paternalistic attitude towards their juniors. The *har'yat* and *shabinar* dependents of lords or monasteries could at least expect to be allowed to work for masters who, usually, had large herds of livestock.[147] To be 'freed' of this status by communist decree, however, was not (in itself) much of a liberation if it did not entail the ownership of livestock or access to it in some other way. All that remained for pastoralists without livestock were the other 'modes of structuring trust' (kin ties, private *süreg* arrangements and other clientelistic relations) that had long been used, particularly between commoners, to reconcile subsistence needs and differential ownership of livestock.

In areas such as Alasha the unequal ownership of livestock and underlying relations of pastoral dependency remained until the early 1950s. This was to be a short-lived sequel to the feudal past, however, for the Chinese Communist Party soon began the construction of an entirely new, apparently socialist, pastoral society in Inner Mongolia.

[146] Natsagdorj (1967: 275–6) notes that *süreg* was carried out by rich commoners as well as the rich nobility. Jagchid and Hyer (1979: 289) note this also, and that wealthy commoners hired herders in pre-communist Shilingol. Simukov (1936: 50) mentions that the Outer Mongolian poor herded livestock for wealthy commoners and those assigned monastery livestock.

[147] Poor commoners were also dependent upon wealthy commoners at that time. Simukov (1936: 50).

3

The Socialist Transformation of Society

From 1948 to 1956 the territory of what became the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region (IMAR) was enlarged as the new communist administration reassembled the regions of Inner Mongolia that earlier Chinese governments had placed under separate provincial administrations. Wherever he could, Ulanhu arranged for the inclusion of neighbouring districts with significant Mongolian populations. During the Civil War Ulanhu's diplomatic efforts to construct and expand the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Movement had allowed the communists to extend the areas under their control in the north-east. The reward for this was to be some sort of autonomous status for Mongolian regions. In 1948, after the incorporation of the areas administered by the EMAG, Ulanhu's Inner Mongolian autonomous administration included the regions of Shilingol, Chahar, Nonni-Muren, Hinggan, and Hulun Buir.[1] In May 1949 two further leagues were included—Jirem and Juu Ud.[2] The capital of Inner Mongolia was moved from Kalgan in the East to Kueisui in 1952, close to Ulanhu's own home district, and the city's Chinese name was changed to a Mongolian one—Hohhot.[3] Ulanhu was able to persuade the Party leadership to extend the territory of the new Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region still further. In 1954 the province of Suiyuan was incorporated into the IMAR and the next year part of Jehol was also added.

These changes, enacted after the communists had secured their rule of China, reflected Ulanhu's ability to advance both his own interests and that of Mongolian cadres in the new administration. In 1930 the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had promised that it would recognize the rights of minority nationalities to secede from China if they wished. By 1938, however, the right to secession had been dropped; but the Party had retained a commitment to respect the rights of minorities and to establish some sort of autonomous government in minority regions. Under the auspices of honouring these pledges Ulanhu succeeded in winning a central role for the Mongolian nationality in the leadership of the Autonomous Region. The 1953 Programme for Enforcement of National Regional Autonomy had declared that the governments of national minority regions would be composed 'principally' of national minority peoples. In the Chinese Constitution of 1954, however, this had been diluted so that the governments were to include only an 'appropriate' number of national minority representatives.[4] Nevertheless,

[1] Shirendyb and Sladkovskiy (1980: 58–60).
[2] This is now the municipality of Chifeng.
[3] Rossabi (1975: 270).
[4] See Benson and Svanberg (1988: 57–8).

Ulanhu was able to ensure that Mongolians had a special place in the new establishment. By the mid-1950s the number of people living in the IMAR was about 7.5 million. Only about 15 per cent of this population was Mongolian, but they were strongly over-represented at all levels of the Party and government; four of the five Inner Mongolian CCP secretaries were Mongolian, for example.[5] Ulanhu, of course, was the First Secretary, and headed not only the Party hierarchy, but also the military and administrative structures in the region. By including as many districts into the Autonomous Region as was practicable he had also gained personal jurisdiction over an immense territory.

After the victory of the communists in the civil war, China as a whole began the wholesale redistribution of property of the land reform campaign.[6] In the eastern part of IMAR land reform was carried out early, in 1947 to 1949, whereas in the western part (in particular the region that had been Suiyuan province) it occurred later, from around 1949 to 1952. These first waves of revolutionary changes were officially described as the 'democratic reform' period, *min zhu gai ge* in Chinese, or *ardchilsan öörchlölt* in Mongolian.[7] In many regions they included the persecution of those considered to be Japanese collaborators or class enemies.

The implementation of 'reforms' in Mongolian regions differed widely from place to place. One reason for this was that different parts of Inner Mongolia came under communist control at different times, and the Party line was changing in that period. There were also differences of opinion within the Party as to how zealously the old order should be eradicated. Ulanhu and his supporters generally favoured a gradual approach to reform in Mongolian regions, and were able to justify this by arguing that Mongolian society was sufficiently different from Han to merit special analysis and treatment. They attempted to formulate policies that would not disrupt production and administration of pastoral areas by terrorizing the local Mongolian élite. Ulanhu was able to make his approach the official Party policy towards Mongolian areas, but not immediately. Some communist officials advocated a harsher destruction of the pre-revolutionary social order, and these policies were pursued in some areas until the IMAR Party leadership was able to bring them into line.

The more radical elements of the Party had advocated classifying people in terms of their class background, and the wholesale redistribution of the property of the rich. Their early policies applied 'the land to the tiller' slogan (aimed primarily at rural China) to some of the eastern Inner Mongolian

[5] Rossabi (1975: 270).
[6] The Chinese term for this movement was *Tudi gaige*. Together with the results of the 1950 Land Reform Law, it led to a violent chapter in Chinese history that designated 'enemies of the people' as well as redistributing land. See Rice (1972: 127).
[7] Written *aradchilagsan ogereelelte*, in classical script.

regions they controlled in the late 1940s. 'Give the land to the farmer and the animals to the one who raised them', was the slogan. Where this policy was implemented it led to animals being slaughtered by anguished owners. In Hishigten banner, Juu Ud league, rich herdsmen reacted to these measures by killing the animals they thought would be confiscated. It is reported that the resulting turmoil led to the death of 80 or 90 per cent of the cattle and horses in the region.[8] In some areas of Chahar (now Shilingol) an extremely high proportion of the pastoral population were classified as being 'herd lords' and 'rich herders'. In one banner over 25 per cent of the population was placed in this category, and faced persecution as a result.[9]

There were a number of strands within the Communist Party. The early redistributive policies were applied principally by the Party in the eastern part of Inner Mongolia—Jirem, Hinggan, and Hulun Buir—which came under the influence of Lin Biao's North-East China Bureau. Ulanhu's power-base was in the west, around Kueisui (Hohhot) and his nearby native region of Tümed; as he gained control of the rest of Inner Mongolia he was able to abandon redistribution and class definition there, on the grounds that this policy disrupted the pastoral economy, and was therefore inappropriate for the Mongolian nationality. The change in Communist Party policy was confirmed by Buhe, the son of Ulanhu and Chairman of the IMAR from 1983 to 1992, in an interview in which he said:

> In the early period of the democratic reform, though we were essentially a herding people, we simply copied methods being used in farming areas. We defined classes, denounced the herd owners, and divided up all the livestock among our herdsmen. Our slogan was 'every farmer has his land and every herdsman has his herds.' The result was heavy losses in animals and a decline in animal husbandry. Later we corrected our mistakes.[10]

This statement, however, gives the impression that the policies mentioned were carried out all over the region, but wholesale redistribution did not happen everywhere. Some western parts of Inner Mongolia, such as Alasha *aimag*, were not even under communist control until 1949, and the regions that Ulanhu controlled had a much softer approach to reform from the start. This clash seems to have been the first between the left wing of the Party in Inner Mongolia and the Ulanhu-led right wing. Rivalry was later to become a key dynamic in the development of the policies pursued in the region.[11] The CCP leadership had accepted that national minorities should be treated with special care and required policies different from those formulated for

[8] Liu and Zheng (1983: 199). [9] Hao Fan (1987: 122). [10] Deng Shulin (1987*b*: 64).
[11] The two factions of the CCP that later formed left and right during the Cultural Revolution have been described by Dittmer (1979: 222–4) as 'radicals' and 'moderates'. Goldman (1979: 180) describes them as the 'Shanghai faction' (led by Chiang Ch'ing, Mao's wife) and the 'bureaucratic faction' led by Joe Enlai and Deng Xiaoping. However, in this account they are also described as left (Maoist) and right (non-Maoist) respectively for clarity.

Han society. Ulanhu was allowed to give Mongolian regions a special status. The new official line was the policy of 'Three Don'ts and Two Favourables'.[12] These were: 'Don't settle scores with herd-owners'; 'Don't distribute herd-owners' livestock'; and 'Don't determine the class status of herdsmen'. The Two Favourables were: 'Be favourable to the hired herdsman' and 'Be favourable to the herd-owner'.

However, those too strongly associated with the Japanese administration of the region were considered enemies by all factions of the Party. Many such people were, of course, also found in eastern Inner Mongolia, which had been administered by the Japanese. They were persecuted; many were jailed and some killed; one informant mentioned a relative in Hailar city who was executed. It is difficult to estimate the number of Mongolian victims of the campaign to hunt down 'Japanese collaborators', but it was not perceived by my informants to have been on the same scale as the later persecution during the Cultural Revolution in which tens of thousands of Mongolians were killed. Some of the herdsmen in a region near my fieldwork area in Hulun Buir migrated to the Mongolian People's Republic at this time, including the official who had been the *sum* head under the Japanese. The possibility that his subjects might escape may have been another reason for the care Ulanhu took over the reform of pastoral regions, many of which were close enough to Mongolia for families to consider fleeing over the border.

In pastoral regions the other official elements of the reform programme had been to (1) eliminate feudal privileges, (2) to open the pasture to unrestricted private grazing, and (3) guarantee the hired herdsman a fair deal. Eliminating feudal privileges consisted chiefly of abolishing slavery and serfdom and removing all the special rights of lamas and nobles. By all accounts the effects of such policies also varied from region to region. In some places, such as Shilingol, the old élite were dispossessed of their power and wealth, but often retained a measure of high status among the locals; however, in other areas, such as the eastern semi-agricultural regions of Jirem and Hinggan, the campaigns against them were more sustained and many were killed or forced to flee.

The declaration of free access to all pastureland, under the call to 'graze freely', abolished the monopoly that certain monasteries and princes had over particularly good areas of pasture. Informants and the *MSLD*[13] agree, however, that in many pastoral regions the pastures of monasteries and lords continued to be respected by the locals. After the local leaders and nobility had been formally stripped of their privileges, the banners were administered by what an official history describes as 'elected' officials.[14] Informants recalled a sort of election at that time, a gathering of Party supporters who voted for

[12] In Chinese, *San Bu Liang Li*. [13] *MSLD*, see Ch. 2.
[14] Liu and Zheng (1983: 194–5).

those candidates nominated by local Party officials with a show of hands, but nothing resembling a popular ballot for rival candidates. Other officials (often the more senior ones) were generally appointed by the Party. Experiences differed, and some areas retained their existing local officials whilst others had them replaced. Many of the new officials that appeared in pastoral regions were Mongolians from the semi-agricultural regions of Jirem and Hinggan, brought in by the communists as cadres and Party workers. The traditional familiarity of eastern Mongolian groups such as the Horchin with Chinese bureaucracy put them in a good position to gain posts in the Party and local administration. Tümed Mongolians from Ulanhu's own *nutag* (home area) near Hohhot were the western Mongolian group noted for their quick advancement into good positions in local government. The persistent rivalry in the administration between eastern and western Mongolians stems, in part, from the tension between these two groups.[15]

Under Ulanhu the Party leadership was concerned to prevent further damage to the interests of rich herdsmen (*malyn ejen*, 'herdlords').[16] Consequently, they could continue to hire people to work for them. This relation was judged to be no longer exploitative because of the introduction of a contract that specified a fair wage for the herdsman on condition of his carrying out the work correctly. This wage was set by local officials, but does not seem to have been very high. In Alasha it was between 15 and 22 yuan a month.[17] In a similar way the administration introduced the New Süreg Regulation (*Shine Süregiin Dürem*).[18] In the old *süreg* system the herding family generally could have only the milk and wool of the livestock it herded, and only if an animal gave birth to twins was it usual for one of the offspring to be given to the herders. Herd-owners were still able to have their livestock pastured for them in this way, but under the new regulation the herder and owner shared the offspring equally. In 1953 Ulanhu managed to get the CCP centre to approve the policy nationally and to introduce the new regulation to other pastoral regions of China.

The Party's adoption of the soft approach to reform meant that pastoral Mongolian regions were out of step with redistribution programmes carried out in agricultural areas. It was acknowledged that the poor herdsman had received less than the land reform had given his agrarian counterpart, the poor peasant. Policies of low taxes and government loans were introduced to try and help the poor herdsman, and informants confirm that some families

[15] It should be noted, however, that none of these changes happened overnight, but spread gradually during the early 1950s.

[16] The herdlord was defined as someone with over 2,000 animals and deriving more than 50 per cent of his income from hired labour. The term is composed of the words *mal*, meaning livestock, and *ejen*, another use of this important word for master, owner, or lord.

[17] *MSLD* 54. This wage was certainly well below the average household income of the studied area.

[18] *Sm-e Syreg-un Dyrim*—classical transliteration.

without animals did receive some livestock. The effects of these policies were significant, if modest, in the region I studied. In 1948 63 per cent of households in Shine Barga Left banner were classified as 'low livestock households', and by 1955 this figure had fallen to 40 per cent.[19] Although some of this reduction could have been due to local officials massaging the statistics, it does seem that the number of poor fell to some extent. Informants recall that life for the poor got better at this time, and there was a slow but steady improvement in general living standards after the difficult years of the war.

Religious Policy

Before 'democratic reform' there had been over 50,000 lamas in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, and as many as 2,300 temples and ecclesiastical establishments of all sorts.[20] In Ih Juu league there were 8,200 lamas out of a total population of 89,000, representing about 20 per cent of the male population, and in Ulaanchab league as many as 44 per cent of the males were monks.[21] In some districts the number could be as high as 60 per cent of males.[22] It is unclear whether these figures, given in an officially approved history, refer to full-time lamas living in monasteries or to the more numerous 'country lamas' who had their own homes but could take part in religious ceremonies. It seems probable that the total of 50,000 lamas referred to both categories of monk, and this is a marked decrease from the estimated 135,000 to 375,000 lamas living in Inner Mongolia in the mid-nineteenth century.[23] It is clear, however, that although in decline, in the late 1940s the Buddhist religious establishment was still one of the most powerful institutions of Inner Mongolia.[24]

The Party leadership was distrustful of the Buddhist sanga, who it suspected of collaboration with the Guomindang. When a campaign against counter-revolutionaries was waged in 1951 many monasteries were subject to armed attack. In the pastoral regions of Hulun Buir, half the twenty-two temples and monasteries were attacked as counter-revolutionary bases, as was the famous Badghar monastery in Ulaanchab. Some lamas were certainly killed in the campaign, but no one I knew could give an estimate as to the number. Officially atheist, the Communist Party viewed Buddhism as a superstitious

[19] Hulun Buir League Government Office, unpublished records.

[20] This high figure is given by Hao Fan (1987: 141). Heissig (1980: 1), gives a lower total, 1,200, and it is probable that Hao Fan's total includes the smallest temples, which were generally without a staff of lamas.

[21] Out of the total population of 19,000, 4,100 were lamas. See Liu and Zheng (1983: 208).

[22] In Jun Wang banner, 800 of the 2,700 Mongolians in the region were monks, ibid.

[23] Miller (1959: 19). The discrepancy between the figures is not simply the result of boundary changes. The territory of IMAR included virtually all the banners of pre-revolutionary Inner Mongolia.

[24] It was still very rich. In 1942, for example, the Bailingmiao (Bat-haalag) monastery owned over 20,000 head of livestock.

ideology, one which helped justify and support the feudal order. It portrayed the sanga as an exploiting class, parasitically ensconced in monasteries and living off the produce of others. That was not, however, how most of my informants saw it. Damdin, a 74-year-old herdsman in Hulun Buir, for example, described the lamas as educated and cultured, able to read Tibetan, and skilled at making medicine for both people and livestock.[25]

Despite Party disapproval, however, under Ulanhu's leadership policy towards lamas was not entirely hostile in the 1950s, particularly in pastoral regions, and they were not represented as a uniform class of exploiters at that time. It was said that the poor monks had been exploited along with the herdsmen, and blame was directed towards the most senior figures in the monastic system. Most lamas were not punished, but were 'encouraged' to participate in 'productive labour', sometimes by being educated to this effect at special 'schools'. In some cases monastic land and livestock had already been redistributed to the poor lamas and *shav'nar*. In other cases the monastic economy could be 'remodelled' by a notional joint monastery–state ownership of the livestock, by having the animals herded under the New Süreg arrangements, or by making other arrangements that left the monastery with some income from the herds. In the 1950s the monastic community was also subject to the administration's efforts to form pastoralists into co-operatives. By 1958, of the 4,000 remaining lamas in Shilingol, 80 per cent had become members of Producers' Co-operatives.[26] As Ulanhu's administration did not seek to eradicate Buddhism entirely at this stage, some monasteries remained undamaged and lamas continued to practise. Damdin described a local example in Hulun Buir:

> In 1952 they made forty or more lamas at Ganjur Süm [monastery] into a *brigad* [production brigade – here used to mean co-operative].[27] It was quite a rich *brigad* because the lamas knew silverwork, carpentry and how to make medicines. They were good at herding, and many were doctors and vets. They were happy there because they lived near the temple. They were all together and could read sacred books and pray at the temple. That all finished in 1966 or 1967, with the Cultural Revolution, they abolished the [monastic] *brigad* and the lamas suffered terribly.

Although he would neither confirm nor deny it, I often wondered if Damdin, who kept his head shaved and had never married, had once been a lama. Two of his brothers had been lamas and he certainly had a more than casual aquaintance with the Ganjür community. The monastery of Ulaan Ganjür ('Red Ganjür') had been the largest and best-known in Hulun Buir. Located in the north of Shine Barga Left banner, on the border with the

[25] The term used, *bichigtei* (lit. with-writing) also means literate, cultured, and civilized.

[26] Liu and Zheng (1983: 372).

[27] The Producers Co-operatives were later designated brigades of the People's Communes, and it is this later term – *brigad* – that Damdin used.

neighbouring Shine Barga Right banner, the temple had been built between 1781 and 1784 to house a copy of the Ganjür scripture written in special and very valuable red ink (*shuuh*,[28] vermilion), from which it gained its name. This scripture had been brought to the region from Beijing some forty years earlier, and although the lamas had conducted religious prayer meetings, they had no temple at that time. Instead they wrapped the scriptures and ritual objects in calfskins, buried them, and built a small house over the place. A few lamas stayed to guard the spot so that the rest of the monastic community could move to seasonal pastures, returning to unearth the objects and perform their annual ceremonies in the eighth lunar month.

The monastery was built to serve both the Left and Right Shine Barga banners[29] but it was located just inside the Left banner, I was told, despite the efforts of the Right banner to claim it. To reflect the importance of both banners to the monastery it was led at first not by one *shireen lama*[30] (head lama) but two; one from the Left banner and one from the Right. Later, in the nineteenth century, the monastery was accepted by the Kanjurwa *hutagt* as his religious seat[31] and became one of the largest and most famous monasteries in Inner Mongolia. It was particularly well known for its huge annual trade fair, which attracted thousands of buyers and sellers from as far afield as southern China and Russia. The site for the trade fair was 3–4 kilometres from the monastery, and was divided into markets or zones (*jeel*) for the traders from different places. Traders from Russia, Shanghai, Dolon Nuur, and local districts all had their own sectors of the area. In the 1940s the fair even included entertainments such as a small open-air cinema, and Chinese opera was performed. The monastery made a considerable income from the fair by collecting fees from the traders.

When the Russian army entered the region the troops occupied the monastery buildings and looted them. When the head lama from the Left banner (the *dagavar shireet*)[32] returned to the monastery he found the floor covered with silver ingots (*yuanbuu*) weighing 50 *lang* (1.865 kg.) each.[33] These had been secretly stored for years in the rafters of the temple. The Russian soldiers had dislodged these as they searched, but they were so tarnished and blackened that the Russians, unfamiliar with the decorative shapes of the ingots, failed to realize that they were solid silver. Thinking the ingots were just some sort of metal decoration they had left a fortune in silver on

[28] Transliterated *sngyn* from the classical script.

[29] Shine Barga Juun (Left) and Shine Barga Baruun (Right) *hoshuus*.

[30] Transliterated *siregen lam-a* from the classical script. The term derives from the word *shiree*, meaning throne, table, or desk.

[31] Ganjur apparently became the seat of the fourth Kanjurwa *hutagt*. See Hyer and Jagchid (1983: 31). I was told that the name of the *hutagt* there was Galsan *gegeen*.

[32] This term was used for the two head lamas, and seems to mean 'associate heads' (transliterated *dagaburi sireged* from the classical script).

[33] *Lang* is a Mongolian rendering of the Chinese unit of weight – the *liang*, 37.3 grams.

the floor. They had, however, taken all the shiny gold and silver images, ceremonial instruments, and valuable-looking items that they had found. After the Russians left, the monastery was repaired with the help of donations from local herding families. When the Chinese communists took control of the region they sent the young *bandi* trainee lamas back to their families, but the adult lamas were allowed to stay if they wished, and were later formed into the co-operative that Damdin described.

The First Five-Year Plan

In 1953 China launched its first Five-Year Plan. In Inner Mongolia the plan introduced some capital investment in pastoral areas, and called for the formation of various types of co-operative the simplest being the Mutual Aid Team. From 1953 to 1956 the government invested 18.5 million yuan in pastoral regions, the official sources recorded, constructing roads, buildings, and wells.[34] At this time the CCP saw the Soviet Union as its model for development. With the help of Russian advisers the Chinese government embarked on a programme of modernization, constructing industrial facilities and beginning the mechanization of rural production. The administration also attempted to increase livestock production, and as one of the most severe limits on the numbers of domestic animals in Mongolia had always been the winter, efforts were made to improve winter provision. Greatly influenced by the methods adopted in pastoral regions of the USSR local government set aside areas for mowing grass for winter fodder, and from 1952 to 1957 official sources recorded 7.5m. tons of hay produced.[35] During this time 400,000 sheds were built to protect the more sensitive animals, notably cattle, from the winter cold. The Soviet advisers also began to encourage the introduction of new, improved breeds of livestock. Although these animals did produce higher yields of wool, milk, and other products, they were more vulnerable to the extremes of Mongolian weather than the native breeds. Many of the new sheds were used to shelter these improved livestock breeds.

The Party called for co-operatives to be set up in rural regions and the investment campaigns were to be channelled through these new organizations. From 1952 to 1955 virtually all of these were classified as Mutual Aid Teams (MATs). These did not collectivize property; the herds remained the property of the owners, but the animals were in theory herded jointly by the members. At their most numerous they included less than half the pastoral households in IMAR. The MUTs also acted as a classificatory term that local

[34] To further efforts to raise production aimed at improving access to water and veterinary care, 6,000 wells were dug in the region, and 375 'veterinary stations' established, though it is uncertain that these facilities were a significant advance on existing ones (see Liu and Zheng 1983: 368). There were also programmes to improve breeds and eradicate predators such as wolves.

[35] Ibid. 465.

government could apply to existing clusters of pastoral households so as to be seen to be carrying out reform. With respect to the practice of pastoralism, it was easy enough for pre-revolutionary arrangements to continue with minimum change under this new regime, and the MATs made little but cosmetic changes to the day-to-day social organization of herding families. The Communist Party considered the MAT to be only the first step towards socialism. It was to be replaced by more advanced co-operatives when the people were ready for collective ownership. In Hulun Buir an old herder and former official recalled that MATs were established around 1952, known locally as *duguilan*,[36] and were not unpopular at the time. Further changes began around 1955 when a campaign was launched to establish more 'advanced' socialist organizations the Producers' Co-operatives (*üildberlelüü horshoo*).[37]

The Producers' Co-operatives were supposed to be introduced gradually on a voluntary basis. Informants agree, however, that these changes were actually dictated by the administration and local leaders had to fall into line with them. Figure 3.1 shows the percentage of Inner Mongolian pastoral households that were classified as being members of MATs and Producers' Co-operatives. The campaign to establish Producers' Co-operatives began in earnest in 1955. In 1957 the number of MUTs plummeted and the numbers of Producers' Co-operatives rose sharply, showing that the MATs were being incorporated into the co-operatives at that time (see Fig. 3.1).

The Producers' Co-operatives were larger than the MATs. Each co-operative included an average of approximately 50 households, about the same number as the pre-revolutionary *hags*. Indeed, in many cases the administrative unit was almost the same, and the formation of these co-operatives was perceived by residents as a change in the form of local government. In theory the Producers' Co-operative took ownership of the animals, assigned work, and paid the members. Members were allowed to keep some livestock privately for subsistence.

The policy towards the herdlords had now become less favourable, under the slogan 'unite and criticize'. This meant that the people should unite with the herdlords and not attack them, but criticize their feudal attitudes. As part of this policy it was not permitted to hire labourers or have servants. In theory livestock was not confiscated by the co-operatives, however, but acquired in one of a variety of ways. They might be bought from the original owner

[36] This term means circle or group. The full Mongolian name of the MAT was *yiledbyrilel un xabsuraleyn dugulang* (joint production group). Other names people mentioned included *anh jeregin horshoo* (first-level co-operative, written *angy-a zerge-yin xorsy-a*), and *huch horshoo* ('strength' co-operative, written *kycy xorsy-a*).

[37] The Producers' Co-operative was termed *uildberlelün horshoo* (production association or co-operative, written *yiledbyrilel-un xorsy-a*) in Mongolian. However, other names were also used, such as *hamtral horshoo* (united co-operative, written *xamtural xorsy-a*), *deed jeregin horshoo* (high-level co-operative, written *degedy zerge-yin xorsiy-a*), and even the Chinese term *gaoji she*.

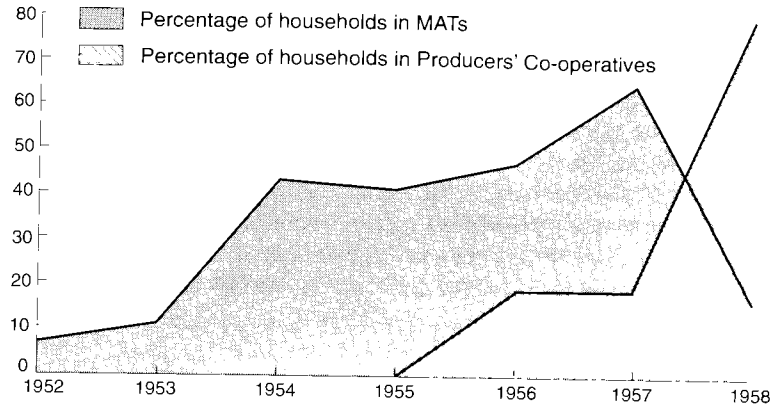


FIG. 3.1 Percentage of pastoral households in MATs and Producers' Co-operatives, 1952–8

who received his money in instalments, or they might be considered 'shares' in the co-operative so that the original owner received a proportion of the produce equal to the number of animals he originally owned and the amount of work he had done that year. Sometimes the 'shareholders' received a flat payment of 2–3 per cent as interest on the value of the animals he had contributed. The herdlords were included on the committee that ran the co-operative, under a cadre who acted as committee head and 'administrative president of the pastureland'.[38]

Informants in Hulun Buir and Shilingol did not consider the formation of these early co-operatives to have been strongly opposed. In Hulun Buir Sodnom[39] a Party official in a pastoral *sum* recalled the period in favourable terms. He recalled:

> Here in our *sum*, in about 1955, around ten per cent of the livestock belonged to rich herdsmen. There were not many of them, less than one per cent of the people here were herdlords, so each one owned a lot of animals. At first they did not have to join the Producers' Co-operatives unless they wanted to, and a few did. But later they had to. By 1958 they had all joined.

By 1958 there were 2,083 pastoral Producers' Co-operatives in IMAR, which included 93 per cent of the herding households.[40] Although the formation of early co-operatives may not in themselves have been widely opposed, the political climate remained tense. In some regions, particularly the semi-agricultural areas in eastern Inner Mongolia where Ulanhu seems to

[38] Liu and Zheng (1983: 368).

[39] Sodnom was a Party official in Shine Barga Left banner. Although as a cadre he may not be without bias, his views were echoed by non-Party locals.

[40] Hao Fan (1987: 219).

have had greater difficulty in preventing radical reforms, the old élite was attacked and persecuted.[41] Those categorized as landlords or Japanese collaborators, if they had not been imprisoned, could find themselves labelled *muu am'tan* ('evil creatures'), and subject to the pitiless hostility of the new administration. There were four types of *muu am'tan*—herdlords or landlords, rich herdsmen or peasants, counter-revolutionaries, and Rightists. One informant's uncle, a Mongolian from a farming region, was classified as an 'evil creature' because he had been a minor official before 'liberation'. 'My uncle was given the worst jobs to do, and he had to wear a badge on his coat to show that he was an enemy of the people,' he recalled. 'It was like being a slave; he had to work in the evenings after the others had stopped, even if there was nothing that needed doing. He had to build enclosures, dig ditches, that sort of thing. His whole family suffered, they were very poor at that time.'

Although he was unable to prevent radical upheavals in every locality, Ulanhu was generally able to promote slow and relatively moderate reform in pastoral regions on the grounds that where it had occurred, attempts at dividing the community into classes and redistributing livestock had damaged the pastoral economy. Although managing to conform with the Party's national policies for agricultural reform, the formation of MATs and their transformation into Producers' Co-operatives does not seem to have provoked the protests and slaughtering of livestock that had been caused by the early redistribution campaigns. The key to this acquiescence seems to have been that the interests of most herdsmen were not strongly attacked. In fact, the MAT retained many of the important rights of the rich herdlord families, namely the ownership of their animals and the management of their pastures.

The Producers' Co-operatives, however, appear at first glance to be an intermediate step to the People's Communes that replaced them, and the sort of collective enterprise bound to antagonize, humble, and impoverish the rich. A closer look shows that these organizations were not necessarily particularly detrimental to the interests of the wealthy families. The animals were herded and disposed of collectively (in practice this meant at the instructions of the co-operative's officials), but in many cases the the animals still belonged to the original owners, classed as 'shares' in the co-operative. The owners were paid according to their original holding—they kept a large proportion of their animals' produce, but the actual herding was done by ordinary herdsmen who were members of the co-operative. In effect, as an arrangement it was remarkably similar to the traditional *süreg tabih* method of leasing animals. It provided poor pastoralists with access to livestock they did not own and the livestock owner with an income from animals that he

[41] This type of victimization seems to have been less common in the pastoral areas of Hulun Buir and Shilingol.

did not have the domestic labour to keep himself. Each family retained the ownership and management of some livestock for subsistence, and although the exact number of animals that could be kept in this way was not specified, it was said to be related to what the family concerned could itself herd.[42] It seems as if the formal regulations for the organization of the Producers' Co-operatives were designed to encourage rich herdsmen to join, and to prevent them from slaughtering their animals. They were not forced into membership of the organizations immediately, but pressured and persuaded into them from 1955 to 1958.

This continuity becomes more apparent when one considers access to pastureland. The Party recommended that rich herdsmen be made members of the committee that ran the co-operative and controlled land use. The chairman of this body was the head of the co-operative and the 'administrative president of the pastureland', and it is significant that this was the formal title given to the overall head of the Producers' Co-operative. The power of local officials in pastoral Mongolian society had long been rooted in their position as custodians of land, and the arbiters of disputes regarding its use.

The model of pre-revolutionary pastoral society described in Ch. 2 characterized the wealthy pastoralist as having ownership of large numbers of animals, access to the labour of others on more or less formal terms, and an interest in maintaining good links to the local officials with control of pastureland. This seems to have been a persisting pattern, and the form of early communist rule of pastoral regions seems to conform to this model. The basic structure of pastoral privilege was reflected and formalized in the Producers' Co-operatives' management system (just as it had been more grandly and fully formalized in Mongolian feudalism). The high-status herdlord families became the core of the management committee, and the head of the *hag*[43] was replaced by the 'administrative president of the pastureland', as the authority with the final say on access to pasture. The language of power had changed from feudal to revolutionary, cadres and committees had replaced banner princes, *taij*s, and their officials and friends. But at the level of the community the basic relations of production and attendant social system had remained relatively unchanged, indeed in some cases (such as the 'fair wage' for pastoral employees) they had been enshrined in official regulations. However, as the new collective institutions became increasingly important, power and authority were progressively concentrated in the hands of local cadres.

During this period the number of animals in the region increased. Whether the official 48 per cent increase from 1952 to 1958 was in part due to the administration being better able to count all the animals in the region is

[42] Liu and Zheng (1983: 364).

[43] The term for this pre-revolutionary official was *bushugh*. See Jagchid and Hyer (1979: 325).

uncertain. However, real growth in herd sizes clearly did occur—probably as a result of the continued recovery of the pastoral economy after the end of the wars. Informants from Hulun Buir and Shilingol agreed that the 1950s brought improvements in herd sizes and standards of living. Figure 3.2 shows how the total numbers of livestock[44] increased from 1952 to 1958. The average number of animals per person in herding regions increased by almost 30 per cent over that time, from 28.2 animals per person to 36.3.[45] In Shine Barga Left banner, Hulun Buir, for example, the number of households with over 100 sheep increased from 405 (32.3 per cent of the total households) in 1948, to 669 (50.4 per cent) in 1955; indicating that the period of the MAT's saw a growth in herds for many poor households.[46] Figure 3.2 also shows a drop in the livestock totals in 1957, and a less marked one in 1955. In official literature these are explained as a result of a severe winter —one of the 'white disasters'[47] that periodically sweep Mongolia with deep snow and freezing winds. Informants did recall some bad winters at around this time, but the loss in animals in 1957 was, at least in part, due also to the political disruption that began at this time — the prelude to the Great Leap Forward.[48]

The Great Leap Forward

By the end of the first Five-Year Plan China had largely recovered from the damage of the Sino-Japanese and civil wars. The CCP had moved to take over the economy from capitalists, but found it increasingly difficult to administer a large and complex economy centrally.[49] There were two choices, as Riskin sees it,[50] for China's leadership at this point: either to allow the market a larger role in distributing produce, or to decentralize political control of the economy. Mao Zedong favoured the latter course. He wanted to pass day-to-day control of work units to local cadres who would carry out central Communist Party policy through mass campaigns.

In 1956 there had begun a debate amongst China's leadership over the draft 1956–1967 National Programme for Agricultural Development. The left of the Party felt that the advanced co-operatives should be turned into more integrated rural communities, but there was no agreement as to what form these new communes should take. Some leaders favoured reducing the size of collective units from the advanced co-operative (which included about 200

[44] These are the end-of-year figures, and exclude pigs (which are kept almost exclusively in agricultural areas). It should also be noted that the figures for 'horses, cattle, and camels' also includes the relatively small numbers of mules and donkeys.

[45] Liu and Zheng (1983: 460).

[46] Hao Fan (1987: 336).

[47] This is an English translation of the Mongolian term *chagaan jud*.

[48] See Rossabi (1975: 271–2).

[49] In 1949 only 3.9% of the output of industry and commerce was from state-owned enterprises. By 1956 this figure had increased to 99.8%. See Hu, Zhang, and Liu (1984: 30).

[50] Riskin (1987: 81).

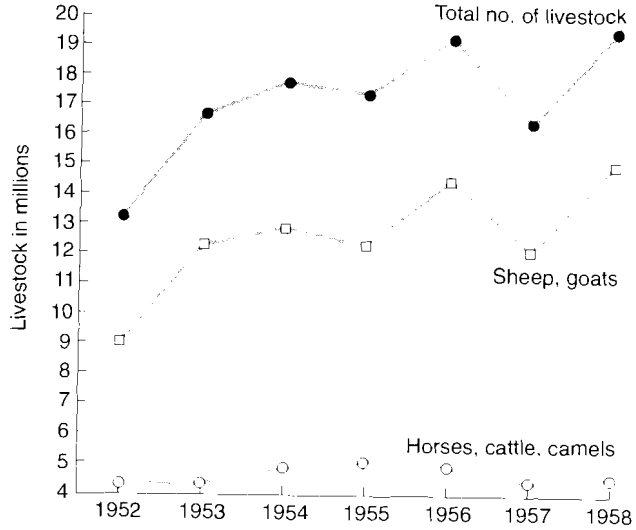


FIG. 3.2 Livestock totals in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, 1952–8

households on average) to the small natural villages (*cun* in Chinese) of about 20 or 30 households.[51] Mao Zedong, however, argued that only by the mechanization of farming and the building of large facilities, such as waterworks, could the countryside be modernized and the distinction between city wealth and rural poverty be reduced. This implied that the new communes had to be reasonably large.

In this contest Mao eventually prevailed, and his vision of large-scale communal institutions became increasingly important. A rural Socialist Education Movement was begun, in which cadres were criticized for failing to appreciate the value of advanced socialist institutions and policies. In the wake of the 1956 One Hundred Flowers movement, the Party also launched an anti-rightist campaign in the summer of 1957. These 'transfers downwards' sent hundreds of thousands of cadres to rural regions. Justified at the time as a way of raising local administrative skills at the lowest level, overcoming local particularism, and educating the cadres as to the conditions in the countryside, the effect was to remove cadres labelled as 'rightist' from the more important levels of the state administration.[52]

In Inner Mongolia the 'left' of the Party was able to attack the more rightist elements of the Ulanhu administration. Although he was still too powerful to be personally denounced, Ulanhu could not prevent his critics from beginning to argue for the need to combat local nationalism, and from accusing cadres of minority nationalities, particularly Mongolians, on these grounds. As early as December 1956 there had been a campaign to 'correct the style' of cadres, which seems to have been a precursor of the Socialist Education Movement. By the time it finished in March 1957 the Inner Mongolian Communist Party Committee had purged half its members, and most state and Party organizations had cut their numbers by 30 per cent. The official press announced at the time that 2,500 cadres had been sent to the countryside, and it seems that most of these victims were Mongolians.[53] The May plenum of the Committee of the Inner Mongolian CCP was an opportunity for Maoists to strengthen their position in the Autonomous Region. They criticized rightist policies on the grounds that they encouraged the élitism and the retrenchment of hierarchy that Mao feared. It was decided to continue the campaign to 'correct style', and this merged with the Socialist Education Movement that began in the summer. As a result a series of mass meetings was held in Inner Mongolia to discuss the pasts of cadres, and, if mistakes were found, to send them for re-education. The spirit of Mao's One Hundred Flowers campaign of free discussion was invoked to encourage criticism. Mongolians were not silenced in the press, however, and there were complaints against 'Han chauvinism', and about claims that Mongolian cadres who did not know Chinese had been dismissed. There were also, apparently, calls to establish a partition in Inner Mongolia, with all Mongolians concentrated in the northern portion, and the Han in the southern one.[54] In the summer of 1957 the national anti-rightist campaign began and 32,000 Inner Mongolian cadres were 'sent down' to rural districts[55] for compulsory re-education.[56] The CCP centre also began to place increasing stress on the need to organize campaigns against 'local nationalism' in minority regions, and this further weakened the position of Mongolian cadres in the administration.

By the end of 1957 and the first Five-Year Plan, Mao Zedong was in a position to press forward with his most ambitious policies to date. The Great Leap Forward (GLF) was his new initiative for the revolutionary development of both agriculture and industry, and has been described as the product of a vision rather than a carefully contrived plan.[57] Mao's idea was to thrust China into modernity and transform society into something approaching a socialist one in a relatively short period of time. Mao's favoured method was the mass campaign, by which he aimed to utilize the enthusiasm of political activists and the masses, rather than the skills of planners. To modernize China investment was clearly needed, and the Maoist idea was that the necessary boost in production could be generated by a massive increase of the labour inputs in agriculture and industry. The People's Commune was

[51] Bennett (1978: 7). [52] Ibid. 8.

[53] Shirendyb and Sladkovskiy (1980: 95). [54] Ibid. 95–8.

[55] i.e. sent to rural areas. Chinese informants tended to talk of political and urban centres, such as Hohhot, as being 'high' and rural areas as 'low'.

[56] Shirendyb and Sladkovskiy (1980: 99). [57] Schurmann (1968: 74).

conceived first as a way of reorganizing rural society so as to allow this extra labour input, and secondly as a real and radical advance along the road to communism.[58] To achieve the increased labour supply there was a need for an organization that pooled workers into larger groups, organized labour so that it could be assigned as needed, and mobilized women to work on the land by collectivizing such household tasks as childcare and cooking.[59] In practice, however, it appears that increased labour alone could not boost production significantly. Intensification of agriculture required a whole host of technical and administrative developments that could not be supplied.[60]

In July 1958 the enlarged Weixing (Sputnik) Agricultural Producer Co-operative of Suiping county, Henan province, which had incorporated twenty-seven small co-operatives, was acclaimed as China's first People's Commune, *Renmin Gongshe* in Chinese. In August that year, Mao's comment was headlined in the *People's Daily* newspaper—'It is better to set up People's Communes: they have the advantage of integrating agriculture, industry, trade, education, and militia, and are easier to lead'.[61] The Resolution on the Establishment of People's Communes in Rural Areas was passed by the Party on 29 August. The campaign to set up People's Communes was fast and furious, and by the end of 1958 more than 26,000 had been established, incorporating nearly all China's rural population. Many of these had been put together so fast that they were little more than skeleton organizations.[62] These groupings of co-operatives that constituted the first People's Communes were very large organizations— including, on average, about 5,000 households each. The leadership felt at that time that large communes were more advanced than small ones, and although their size varied widely in practice the communes usually incorporated several *xiang* (townships), and often the boundaries cut across the traditional marketing areas. This began to cause problems, so in 1961 the communes were made smaller, and by 1963 there were 74,000 of them, each about a third of the size of the original People's Communes. (The communes grew in size over the next fifteen years until by the late 1970s there were 50,000 of them with populations of about 3,000 households each.[63])

The formal structure of the new organizations had three levels. Each People's Commune was made up of production brigades, which in China and agricultural regions of Inner Mongolia had an average size of about 200

[58] The theory of labour that Mao subscribed to favoured this vision. Some studies of rural production suggested that labour had an increasing marginal utility. See Stavis (1978: 113–14).

[59] Probably the most important reason for instituting the People's Communes was the government's desire to control the peasants' production directly. Deng Zihui admitted as much in a statement in 1955: 'Individual peasants cannot be directly controlled by the State plan. They formulate their production plans according to their own requirements and particularities; they cannot formulate plans according to the requirements of the State.' See Riskin (1987: 91).

[60] Stavis (1978: 115). [61] Cited in Bennett (1978: 8). [62] Ibid. 10.

[63] See Riskin (1987: 123).

households, and roughly corresponded to the old Producers' Co-operatives. At first there must have been about 25 brigades in each commune, but later this was reduced to around 15 as the communes were reduced in size. In most of China each production brigade was made up of an average of 7 production teams of about 30 households.[64] These teams were usually made up of a single village (*cun*).

The 29 August resolution called for Producers' Co-operatives to merge into communes by 'ideological emancipation on a voluntary basis, without any compulsion'. But informants agreed that locals had no choice but to conform to them. Mongolian friends at a university in Hohhot gave me their perspective on Mao's reasons for advocating the GLF. Mao had learnt his style of leadership in winning a guerrilla war, they said, and in peacetime he still saw the same techniques as being the best hope for communism. He was also concerned that the country was developing a hierarchy once more, with an entrenched élite. His answer was to promote revolution as a process rather than as a completed event. He wrote, 'Our revolutions come one after another,' in his 'Sixty Points on Working Methods' draft resolution of the Central Committee (31 January 1958), and went on to say 'Our revolutions are like battles. After a victory we must at once put forward a new task. In this way cadres and masses will forever be filled with revolutionary fervour . . .'[65]

The philosophy behind the GLF required that politics should command economics—so incentives for work should be primarily ideological, not material. A portion of income in the People's Communes was distributed free and in kind, usually as free food in dining halls, but often much more. A work-point system was widely introduced, with individuals paid according to the value of their work. This was an attempt to give an incentive to hard, careful labour, but in many communes it was replaced by a monthly wage system which was considered more left and ideologically correct.[66] To free women of traditional housework, and promote the co-operative spirit, many communes instituted mess-hall dining, often with free food, and people were required to eat in communal mess halls rather than at home. To this end in some districts family pots and pans were confiscated and melted down! Whilst in the pastoral regions the distances between encampments generally prevented communal eating, a Mongolian from an agricultural district in Jirem *aimag* told me that the practice was introduced in his home village in about 1959. Each brigade had a building where locals were to eat, but the arrangement was unpopular. People complained that the food was not very good and after about a year the mess halls were abandoned.[67]

[64] Bennett (1978: 18). [65] Cited in Riskin (1987: 116). [66] Ibid. 122.

[67] These measures seem to have been generally unpopular in China as a whole, and there are reports of peasants refusing to work and physically attacking cadres; see Bennett (1978: 8–12).

The aim of the GLF was also rapidly to industrialize China, and Mao called for the country to 'catch up with Britain in steel production within 15 years'. At that time China produced 5m. tons of steel a year, whilst the UK produced 40m.[68] The familiar emphasis upon small-scale initiative by people throughout China was the advocated means of accomplishing this goal. Communes and enterprises established backyard iron-casting furnaces and other small-scale factories. In 1958 several hundred thousand such miniature enterprises were set up in the People's Communes alone. This diverted valuable labour from farm work, and millions of tons of low-grade iron ingots were produced which could not be used or even moved. Locals recalled the time with ironic humour, noting that even street railings and pots and pans were taken to be melted down into useless lumps of iron.

This frenzy of activity was largely uncoordinated and led to misdirected production and enormous problems of distribution. Further problems were produced in agriculture by the crash collectivization programme carried out, the disruption of normal life, and the damaging effects of communalization on incentives for work. Furthermore, administrators often applied doctrinaire new policies uniformly to regions with great ecological and social differences.[69] This disruption harmed agricultural production and by spring 1959 food shortages began to become apparent. Local cadres were urged to cut back free services and return to commune members their confiscated houses, bank deposits, and other assets. In a meeting of the Politburo in February and March that year, Mao admitted that the GLF had failed, and made a self-criticism. He agreed that central planning had all but disappeared during the Leap, and admitted he knew nothing about economic construction.[70]

A tragic aspect of the GLF was that, in the excitement of the new initiative, the reports of the size of the 1958 harvest had been exaggerated out of all proportion by local government, so that the centre believed that China as a whole had a record-breaking 375m. metric tons of grain, when in fact the harvest was closer to half that amount.[71] It was all too easy for such exaggeration to occur. As good results were taken as proof of responsible implementation of the (necessarily excellent) policies developed by the centre, there were strong pressures on cadres to report that the results of government policy were marvellously successful. There was virtually no check to counter this tendency; very few alternative lines of communication existed between rural communities and the regional and national leadership, apart from the very Party and government officials whose advancement relied upon their presentation of good results. The consequence was a tendency to compound exaggeration at each level of the administrative hierarchy, so that by the time the centre received the information it had diverged widely from the real situation on the ground.

[68] Riskin (1987: 125). [69] Stavis (1978: 111–15). [70] Riskin (1987: 127). [71] Ibid.

Pastoralism and the People's Communes

The campaign to introduce People's Communes in IMAR began in 1958, and by the end of the same year the 11,000 Agricultural Producers' Co-operatives were formed into 682 People's Communes, which included over 80 per cent of the peasant households in Inner Mongolia. The 2,083 livestock Producers' Co-operatives, very predominantly Mongolian, were grouped together to form 152 People's Communes, including over 90 per cent of the herding households and more than 80 per cent of the region's livestock.[72] In many ways the communes represented a radically new administrative form of the old *sum* local government districts, and the internal reorganization of the co-operatives began after they became production brigades of the People's Communes. Figures suggest that the People's Communes in herding regions included an average of about 650 households,[73] a typical size for a *sum*. This is in marked contrast to the size of the People's Communes in agricultural regions of China which were much larger (containing an average of about 5,000 households when first established).[74] The old livestock Producers' Co-operatives in many cases simply turned into production brigades in the new People's Communes with minimal adjustment, and seem to have generally retained an average size of about 50 to 80 households each.[75]

The overall trend in the formation of first the Producers' Co-operatives and then the People's Communes was to increase the level of state planning and control of the economy, and to extend the Party's political and social control over rural communities. In each case the administrative units were made larger, from the MAT to the Producers' Co-operatives and then the People's Commune. Secondly, the level of collective ownership increased in each case—to reach its temporary maximum in the early years of the People's Communes where in some cases household goods were confiscated. Thirdly, the importance of quotas and the control of production by the state also increased at each step.

At the same time policies towards the Mongolian nationality became more assimilationist and less tolerant of the cultural differences that Ulanhu had used to justify his opposition to class struggle in pastoral regions. In 1959 there began a campaign to list all the valuables owned by commune members; this included Mongolian jewellery and family heirlooms, such as the

[72] Liu and Zheng (1983: 357), and Shirendyb and Sladkovskiy (1980: 103).

[73] Liu and Zheng (1983: 570).

[74] It is not surprising that the administrative units in herding regions tended to have smaller populations than their agricultural counterparts. As pastoral production is a very much more extensive use of land, herding regions have long had a low population density, and as a result the administrative units have tended to include more land and fewer people than have farming areas.

[75] In the pastoral regions that I studied the People's Communes had contained from 4 to 7 brigades, which does not account for 650 households, but it should be remembered that the 'auxiliary brigade' based at the *sum* centre was generally larger.

men's knives and women's headdresses, which were often made of silver. In 1960 these valuables were confiscated in many localities.[76] Although some of the goods that were collectivized around this time were returned after the high tide of Maoism had passed, many families never saw their silver heirlooms again. Some informants said, bitterly, that the sorts of 'antique' traditional jewellery that foreigners can buy in exclusive hotels and shops in Hohhot and Beijing were taken from their families. Several families I stayed with still possessed such items; some were made recently in the traditional style, but others had been successfully hidden.

Up until 1960 there had been some use of the Cyrillic alphabet to write Mongolian, as was used in the Mongolian People's Republic. In Hulun Buir the better-educated herdsmen over about 45 years of age knew this writing system. At the time of the GLF there were calls to extend the Leap into the field of education and culture, and in 1960 this led to the elimination of the Cyrillic alphabet.[77] Many Mongolians, especially intellectuals, resented the suppression of this script, which they felt represented another attempt to isolate the Mongolians of China from the rest of the Mongolian-speaking world.[78] (The older classical Mongolian script was still routinely used and taught after this date, however, even during the worst years of the Cultural Revolution.) Other GLF policies were also extremely unpopular among pastoralists. Maoist thought called for more grassland to be brought under the plough; this reduced the amount of prime pasture or hay-cutting land, however, and brought increasing numbers of Han migrants to rural areas. Both developments were widely resented by locals.

Cadres in pastoral regions were put under pressure to increase productivity and to speed the development of the pastoral economy. After the severe winter of 1957/8 and the turmoil of collectivization, livestock numbers began to rise once more. The 'rationalization' of pastoral production continued under the second Five-Year Plan (1958–62). One of the most important developments was the expansion of haymaking areas to supply fodder for the animals in winter. This was considered to be one of the most effective methods by which livestock numbers could be raised, helping herds to survive the winters that were, in many places, a major factor in limiting animal numbers. (Winter and spring are the most difficult times of the pastoralist's year as vegetation above the ground is largely dead and if more than a few centimetres of snow falls it makes it difficult for the animals to reach the grass beneath.) By the end of the Plan in 1962 the area used for this sort of fodder had increased to over 17,000 hectares.[79] Official statistics claim that in

[76] Shirendyb and Sladkovskiy (1980: 103). [77] Ibid. 104.

[78] It is ironic that many Mongolians in the MPR resented the introduction of the Cyrillic script for similar reasons. It was seen as cutting them off from their traditions and from other Mongolian populations.

[79] Hao Fan (1987: 278).

1962 the total amount of hay cut was twice that for 1957, giving a figure of 32m. tons. Over this period the official figures for the number of winter sheds rose by 50 per cent.[80]

Further work to increase water supplies was promoted by the Party. By 1962 the number of wells in the region had officially risen to 410,000.[81] However, these official figures are a poor indication of the real improvement of water supply in the region, and were, in part, a product of the constant propaganda that government officials at all levels produced to show the zealousness with which they were carrying out Party policy. Of the wells sunk in 1958 as part of the Great Leap, for example, 10,000 were apparently dry.[82] They had been dug with no knowledge of geology. Nevertheless, livestock numbers rose quickly, as Fig. 3.3 shows.

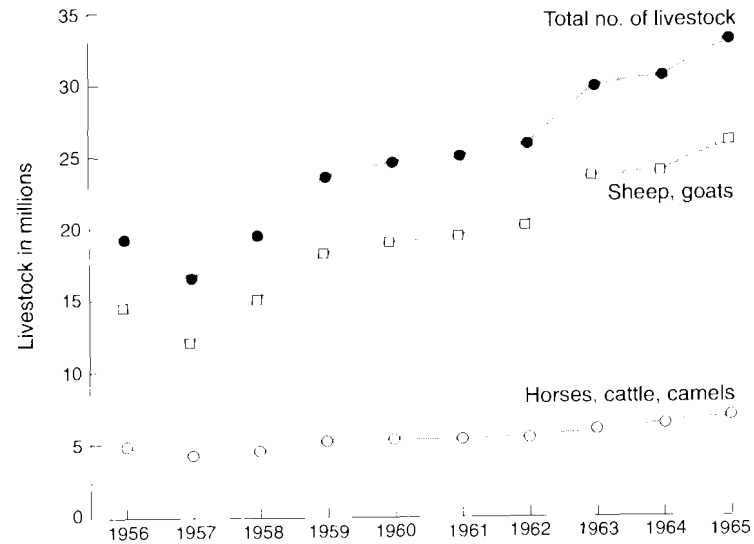


FIG. 3.3 Livestock totals in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, 1956–65

The reason for this rapid increase became clear after herdsmen had described life in the People's Communes. The consumption of livestock was strictly limited so that totals would increase rapidly. Chuluunbaatar, a herdsman whose father had been a *sum* official during the Japanese administration remarked that in the commune (*gongshe*)[83] pastoral families were instructed

[80] Liu and Zheng (1983: 593). [81] Ibid. 574. [82] Shirendyb and Sladkovskiy (1980: 102).

[83] The Mongolian term for the People's Commune is *ardyn negdel*, but many simply used the Chinese term *gongshe* (short for *renmin gongshe*).

exactly how many animals they could slaughter for food, and it was forbidden to eat more. 'If a guest came to visit we could not slaughter a sheep, not even one!', 74-year-old Damdin remarked. 'Yes, there were many animals at that time, more than today. In our *sum* there were 90,000 animals, but you were not allowed to eat them, and you were not allowed to sell them. What use were they? There were lots of animals, but we were poor.'

The administration continued to promote the introduction of improved livestock breeds, or at least the numbers recorded as such. The number of animals categorized as of 'good or imported stock' had shot up by 1962 to 14 times the 1957 figure—totalling 2.144m. Much stress was laid on the use of foreign strains of animals for cross-breeding, such as sheep from the Caucasus and cows from Poland which were cross-bred with native Mongolian strains. Dramatic improvements in the yields of animal products were claimed, but herdsmen told me that the new breeds did poorly and required special care and extra fodder; they often failed to survive local weather and conditions. Efforts were also made to increase the level of veterinary care, and by 1961 the number of vets listed had risen to 1,040.[84] Some other investment in herding regions, such as mechanization, also took place. There were over 3,500 animal-drawn grass-cutting machines in use by 1962, and around 200 tractors.[85] Official literature claims that by the end of the second Five-Year Plan the herdsmen's income had risen by a massive 60 per cent,[86] but this did not match the recollections of my informants who thought of the period as one of hardship. Part of the increase of herdsmen's income on paper may have been a result of the new organizations' better ability to channel all animal sales through the state.[87] Also, herding regions experienced a severe cash squeeze in the 1950s, when prices for animal products were decreased by around 25 per cent and the prices of the products they bought increased by about the same amount, and this may account for part of the supposed increase in income.

The average number of animals per head of the herding population exceeded 30 for the first time, but the herdsman did not benefit proportionally. Over the second Five-Year Plan the proportion of livestock consumed by the herding families decreased, whilst the percentage sold to the government increased. This shows the success of the communes as a means by which the state could extract more produce from the rural population. From 1957 to 1962 the proportion of herd growth that was consumed for food by

[84] Liu and Zheng (1983: 579).

[85] It seems that these machines were not generally allocated to the People's Communes at first, but were kept and maintained at state Agricultural Machinery Stations. These were, however, dismantled after the Cultural Revolution and the machinery handed over to the People's Communes; see Stavis (1978: 72.).

[86] Hao Fan (1987: 279).

[87] Before the People's Communes, there was more scope for barter or private deals, which went unrecorded, and this could have accounted for a large proportion of the herdsmen's income.

herding families fell by more than a third, from 39.9 to 24.2 per cent. The proportion sold to the state increased from 33 to 43.1 per cent (representing 5m. more animals than were sold from 1955 to 1957).[88]

Some of the rapid growth in herd size was also accomplished at the expense of the nutrition and size of the animals. Quotas and pressure on cadres to raise the livestock totals often meant that quality suffered at the expense of quantity. The drive to increase the size of the herds also changed the ratio between different species of livestock. The numbers of faster-breeding 'small animals' (sheep and goats) increased at more than three times the rate of 'large animals' (cattle, horses, and camels)—at 9.9 per cent per annum rather that 3.1 per cent. In the winter of 1957 over 2m. animals had died in the bad weather and the disruption of reforms. In the winter of 1961 over twice as many animals died—5.7m.[89] Nevertheless, despite the widespread famine that gripped the region at this time (described below), the official figures show that cadres somehow managed to record a rise in the livestock numbers that year.

It was at this time that pasture degradation seems to have increased rapidly, alongside the many doomed attempts to farm the grassland launched as part of the Leap.[90] Growing numbers of livestock increased the pressure on the grasslands that supported them, and forced pastoralists to make use of more marginal land. Official sources note that over the second Five-Year Plan the 'rate of use of pasture was increased in general about 15 per cent to 30 per cent, and more than 12 million *mu*[91] (800,000 hectares) of abandoned pasture was brought back into use'.[92] It was also claimed that an additional 2m. *mu* (over 133,000 hectares) of previously unused land was converted to pasture, due to the success in irrigating and reclaiming barren areas. That there was some discussion of the problem of overstocking pastures at the time is shown by the official material. An official history notes, 'Some people insisted on "the theory of pasture being used up" . . . and considered it hard to develop the production of the herding economy further.' The success of the second Five-Year Plan, the history states, 'proved the shortage of evidence for these viewpoints'.[93] These campaigns, it now appears, began to have a widespread impact on the ecology of the region, reducing yields in vast areas of pastureland. Official figures suggest that by 1989 the amount of grasslands in IMAR had decreased by 6.2m. hectares since 1965 (from 92.9m. to 86.7m. hectares), and pastures classified as 'deteriorated grassland' increased from 1.2m. to 29.9m. hectares. Total grass production was estimated as having dropped by

[88] Liu and Zheng (1983: 588).

[89] Ibid. 592.

[90] The nature and extent of damage done to grasslands is a controversial issue. However, the assessment of Chinese grassland specialists in the 1980s and 1990s is that widespread pasture degradation did take place (see Sneath 1998).

[91] A *mu* is a Chinese unit of land. 1 hectare is equal to 15 *mu*.

[92] Hao Fan (1987: 278).

[93] Liu and Zheng (1983: 669).

30 per cent over this period.[94] It is estimated that 85 per cent of damage of this sort was due to destructive efforts to reclaim land, overgrazing, and the felling of trees.[95] In the 1980s and 1990s Chinese specialists have concluded that in the long term pasture could indeed be 'used up', or at least degraded through mismanagement.[96] The technical basis for the policies of the 1960s was fairly low. An experiment carried out in a single area was often used to justify sweeping general policies, such as the success of increasing the water supply to the parched banner of West Sünid being used as justification for well-digging campaigns throughout the region. Such general campaigns were often pushed ahead with little reference to soil type, existing drainage patterns, or the depth of the water table.

The second Five-Year Plan advocated eight maxims in pastoral regions, and they provide an interesting example of the methods of Chinese administration, based on mass campaigns. The maxims were clearly designed to be easily memorized. They were: (1) 'Water'; this stood for building irrigation projects, wells and reservoirs; (2) 'Grass'; this was for establishing haymaking areas, to rotate animals on different pastures in turn, and to increase pasture to meet the growing needs of production; (3) 'Raising'; the policy was to raise the rate of increase of the animals by full utilization of the adult female animals and other methods; (4) 'Improving'; the improvement of animal breeds and increased use of artificial insemination methods; (5) 'Management'; the strengthening of the responsibility of the commune members and the authority of the managers; (6) 'Protecting'; this was to remind people to widen veterinary activities to prevent disease and take measures to protect livestock from predators and natural disasters; (7) 'Enclose' stood for building sheds and enclosures to protect animals in winter; (8) 'Tools' stood for mechanizing production.[97]

These maxims, that in theory were general enough to be adapted to local conditions anywhere, were often based on assumed needs and problems; they often did not fit the local situation, and can have been of little use to experienced herdsmen. What such campaign slogans did serve to do, however, was to pressure local cadres into producing at least the appearance of progress in the specified areas. The implicit doctrine behind the plan and its maxims was the faith in humankind's ability to overcome natural obstacles and to increase production. The theory that 'pasture can be used up', for example, was deemed to be false and defeatist. If only the masses were inspired to try hard enough, a constant increase in productivity was possible. Today, however,

[94] National Research Council, Office of International Affairs (1992: 18).

[95] Cited in A Fa (1987: 43). These problems were not limited to Inner Mongolia: Wang *et al.* (1985: 178) write that a total of 17.5% of China's total of 266m. hectares of grazing land has been seriously affected by desertification.

[96] See Loucks and Jianguo (1992: 71); Zhang Xinshi (1992: 48). Erdenijab (1996: 190).

[97] Liu and Zheng (1983: 584–6).

with what specialists judge to be widespread pastoral degradation evident, the state has had to admit that in some regards its victory over nature was a temporary one, at best.

Other policies were introduced at this time that began to have an impact on pastoralism, such as the campaign to settle the 'nomads'.[98] The advocacy of sedentarization reflected the modernist vision of the Chinese Communist project, which implied that settled life was more advanced than the traditional nomadism of the Mongolians.[99] To some degree it was recognized, however, that under the ecological and climatic conditions of the Inner Mongolian steppe, livestock would continue to have to be moved over quite large distances. The state's aim was to produce communities that were 'settled with moving herding', so that whilst some family members stayed at the administrative centre (at the lowest level this meant the production brigade) others moved with the animals to seasonal pastures when necessary. One perceived advantage of such mobile herding about a fixed base was that children could more easily attend schools set up at such centres. Over the second Five-Year Plan more than 670,000 families became classified as 'settled' in this way. By 1962 40 per cent of the households of Shilingol which had been entirely mobile until 1949 had been classified as 'settled with moving herding'.[100]

The more purely pastoral districts tended to have fewer static dwellings. In the *sum* I studied in Shine Barga Left Banner, Hulun Buir, only about half the households had brick buildings at the centre in 1988, and the other half stayed there only at certain times of the year in their felt *ger*. Building work had continued since the late 1950s, and an increasing number of families, especially those of officials, were given the use of mud-brick houses. Herding families with houses would be classed as 'settled with moving herding' which generally entailed part of the family (often the old and children attending school), living in the house whilst other family members still made use of a *ger* to move with the livestock to seasonal pastures. House building has continued throughout the IMAR, and by the early 1990s the majority of pastoral households in Inner Mongolia had access to such static accommodation.

Another of the objectives of the Maoist leadership in the 1950s and 1960s was to step up Han immigration into the region, both to help develop the economy by raising agricultural production, and to relieve population pressure in China proper. The predominantly Mongolian pastoral areas were considered to have the most 'spare land', and at first most of the settlers were

[98] There is some evidence to suggest that the reduction of pastoral mobility rather than the simple overstocking of pastures may have had a serious impact upon the grassland ecology of the region; see Humphrey and Sneath (1999: 265–93).

[99] My use is based on Gellner's characterization of 'modern society' (1988*a*: 117). In this context the concept is not the same as 'Western pluralistic society', but is rather the modernity of a Marxist society, which Gellner (ibid. 220–1) describes as 'built around a well-integrated 19th century system'.

[100] Liu and Zheng (1983: 569).

sent to such regions. Twenty new towns were established in herding regions, with populations of between a few thousand and several tens of thousands.[101] The population figures from Hulun Buir *aimag* (league) show an increase in the Han population of over 400,000, from 670,032 in 1958 to 1,087,549 in 1960. Shirendyb and Sladkovskiy[102] note that in 1958 and 1959 as many as 1m. Han settlers arrived in IMAR. As Hulun Buir league alone accounts for nearly half this number of immigrants, and there are a total of eight leagues in Inner Mongolia, it is probable that the true number of settlers was even higher. These settlement schemes, although they were presented as a national effort to help the development of minority regions, bore a remarkable resemblance to older Chinese policies. During the Republican period the state had sought to secure its border territories by encouraging Han settlement in regions such as Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang. By 'diluting' the minority nationality populations, their homelands became more firmly incorporated into the Chinese state. In 1947 there were 4 Han Chinese in Inner Mongolia for every Mongolian; by 1960 this ratio had more than doubled to 9 : 1.[103] The increasingly bitter Sino-Soviet split also resulted in the Chinese state stationing large military garrisons in Inner Mongolian areas next to the MPR and USSR. The size of this military presence remains secret, but was probably more than one and a half million – the rumoured number of troops stationed there in the late 1980s.

Rural districts in Inner Mongolia were classified into three basic categories. First there were pastoral districts, with significant populations of largely mobile Mongolian pastoralists– most of western Hulun Buir, northern Shilingol, and Alasha consisted of such areas, as well as parts of Ih Juu, Bayan Nuur, and Ulaanchab leagues.[104] Next there were semi-pastoral, semi-agricultural districts, which were usually areas with sedentary Mongolian populations that practised farming as well as some herding. Much of banner districts in Jirem, Ih Juu, and Hinggan leagues, and Chifeng municipality were placed in this category, as well as some parts of the other leagues. Lastly there were agricultural districts peopled predominantly by Han Chinese, and these included large parts of all the leagues which bordered China proper, as well as parts of Bayan Nuur.

In the early 1960s the semi-pastoral, semi-agricultural areas were seen as models for the pastoral regions. It was argued that the two sectors supported each other. In theory the herding sector provided fertilizer and draught animals for agriculture, whilst the agricultural sector produced winter fodder

[101] Liu and Zheng (1983: 569).
[102] Shirendyb and Sladkovskiy (1980: 105).
[103] Hyer and Heaton (1968: 117).
[104] Hinggan also has a single banner classified as pastoral. The number of banners so classified has varied; in 1990 the administration classified 33 banners in the IMAR as pastoral, and 21 as semi-pastoral. The remaining 46 banners were classified as agricultural; Longworth and Williamson (1993: 34)).

for the animals.[105] Techniques such as rotating grass and crops on the same ground were recommended as marvellously productive, as it was said to fix nitrates in the soil. This served as justification for settling Han farmers in pastoral Mongolian areas. Many livestock communes were sent Han farmers who tried to coax harvests out of steppeland near the commune centres. It was during the 1960s that most of the Han who live in the *sum* I studied in Hulun Buir, for example, were sent there. They numbered about 500 in 1988, and many grew vegetables in their gardens for sale. They owned a few animals, and tended to be poorer than the Mongolians who owned almost all the livestock and generally avoided mixing with them socially. Many of them found they had to learn some Mongolian, as most of the residents and all the *sum* officials were Mongols.[106] In these respects, however, Bayan Gol is typical only of the relatively few localities that have a large Mongolian majority. In much of Inner Mongolia, Chinese is the language of administration, particularly at the higher levels.

Life in the People's Commune

The People's Communes remained the administrative setting for pastoral life until the early 1980s. I met a few Mongolian Party members, such as Nasan-Ochir in Shilingol and Lubsandorj in Hulun Buir, who still approved of the communes, but most of the other pastoralists I knew said that they were glad to see them abolished. Pastoral households were allowed to own a small number of private animals, typically three cows for domestic milk needs, one or two horses for riding, and between 10 and 20 sheep and goats for meat. Most of the livestock, however, belonged to the commune, and was allocated to herding households by officials. During the GLF cadres even controlled the number of private livestock that households could slaughter for food, such was the emphasis on increasing total livestock numbers. Politics was an intrinsic part of commune life, and the task of the cadres was to relay national policies and political campaigns down to the grassroots. There were periodic political meetings in the evenings. Damdin remarked that these were generally boring events and, as participants might well have ridden a long way to get to the meetings, people often fell asleep in the warmth of the meeting hall.

These meetings became more frequent during the Cultural Revolution, and were generally conducted by the *sum* and Party officials. Many such officials were, and remain, respected figures locally. Although they may have dozed during meetings, most brigade members had to take them seriously at the time. But the contrast between the reality of everyday life and the political

[105] Liu and Zheng (1983: 565–6).
[106] Indeed, in some respects the Han seem to be dominated by the Mongolians. At a school event I attended Mongolian youths heckled a Han girl when she tried to sing a Chinese song until she sat down in tears. The school officials, who were largely Mongolian, pointedly ignored the incident.

fiction that they were forced to subscribe to was the subject of a good deal of ironic humour. About the GLF they said 'You could die, but you couldn't speak about it!' Another typical sardonic comment was: 'It was all right to be poor, but not to be rich. It was all right to work, but not to rest. It was all right to be hungry, but not to be full!'

Theoretically the Party's political agenda included a transformation in the position of women, as part of the destruction of the 'old society'. Since the Democratic Reform period, women had been encouraged to denounce tyrannical and violent husbands, and in the 1950s compulsory education was introduced for both female and male children. The Party also hoped to mobilize the support and labour-power of women to help achieve its ambitious production targets. State media and the Party propaganda machine encouraged women to participate in the public realm of politicized labour and Party work, images of young women driving tractors and herding on horseback using an *uurga* (a lasoo on a pole), as traditionally done by men, appeared in official publications. The efforts to shape attitudes included books for children such as *The Two Little Sisters of the Grassland*, which tells the story of a pair of heroic girls who saved the commune's livestock; it was even translated into English. The official motto (translated from an originally Chinese slogan) was 'Women support half the state' (*emegteichüüd töriin hagas tulguur*').[107]

The People's Communes provided a powerful institutional setting for the surveillance and regulation of gender relations. The all-female Women's Association was an intrinsic part of the administrative structure of the communes, and its director was one of the senior commune officials. The most important post was that of Party secretary (*shu ji*) and this was occasionally held by a woman, although more usually by a man. Next there were generally two or three vice-secretaries, one of whom was often a woman, and the director of the commune who usually had two or three deputies overseeing a number of sections of local administration. Frequently the Education Department and the Women's Association were grouped and overseen by one of these officials, and it was common for this post to be held by a woman, reflecting the continued association between the female gender and the care of children.

Although ostensibly designed to represent women and their interests, in effect the association was primarily a conduit by which Party policy regarding women's roles, domestic arrangements, and, later, family planning, was passed down to pastoralists. At first most of its work was aimed at rooting out old attitudes, such as the emphasis on arranged marriages. Dulmaa, who was in her late fifties in 1988, was a member of the Women's Association in Shine Barga Left banner (Shine Barga Jüün *hoshuu*). She explained the official line:

[107] Apparently this was a Mongolian version of the Chinese slogan 'women are half the sky'.

In the old society there was the oppression of the 'three great mountains' on women (*gurvan ih uulyn darlal*). There was the oppression of feudal customs (*jang jangshil*),[108] religious doctrine (*nomlol*) and of family custom (*yos*). In the new society we are free of these three mountains. In the past there were too many rules and restrictions for women – before marriage young engaged men and women could not even meet. So women were betrothed to men they had not even met! Women had an awful lot of restrictions (*chigerleltai*). A newly married bride would always eat last. She could not mention the name of her father-in-law, and could not look straight at him.[109]

It was pointed out to me that, strictly speaking, neither a wife nor husband was supposed to speak the name of their respective parents-in-law (or indeed affinal grandparents), and it was customary not to mention the names of highly respected figures. People traditionarily tend to avoid using their own parents' names, for example, and that of holy mountains, which it is still considered unlucky to name. However, a newly married woman was traditionally supposed to be extremely polite and respectful to her new affines, and was expected to observe all these formalities meticulously. Her relationship with her father-in-law was subject to particular restrictions – although some of these applied to him. If a father-in-law needed something from the new bride's *ger*, for example, he should not go in and get it himself if she was alone; instead he had to stand outside and call for her, or ask someone else to go in and get the item for him. Purebmaa, an 82-year-old Barga woman, had more ambiguous attitudes towards the changes. She agreed that customs were very strict in the 'old society' and noted that there had been stronger norms regarding appropriate marriage partners.[110] However, she stressed that in the 'old society' people had been very polite (*yostoi*) and respected elderly people much more than they did now.

Despite the entry of women into the administration, the division of labour in the pastoral encampment itself remained largely unchanged during the commune period; the Party seemed more concerned with increasing the amount of labour done by pastoralists than in changing who habitually did what. Women continued to milk the animals, prepare foods, cook, childmind, and make clothes. Men continued to herd livestock at some distance from the encampment, look for stray animals, cut hay, repair enclosures, and slaughter livestock. Some elements of women's work, and most of the men's, were

[108] Written *zan zanshil* in Cyrillic and *zang zangsil* in the classical script.

[109] The term used was *tegsh harj bolohgui*, 'must not look *tegsh* [at him]'. *Tegsh* means level or straight, but also means equal, so that a 'level look' has an association with looking 'as an equal'. Indeed the term used for equality or equal rights is *tegsh erh* (level rights).

[110] She mentioned, for example, the saying 'marriage with maternal uncle's daughter brings sunshine, marriage with paternal uncle's daughter brings mischief', *nagacha-saan huulgabal nar garna, abaga-saan huulgabal alhan* (transliterated from classical script, *Nagacu-ece-ban hagulgabal nara garuna, abaga-ece-ban hagulgabal alijana*), which reflects traditions of patrilineal exogamy more fully discussed in Ch. 7.

incorporated into the commune's operation, and (although paid) became subject to the increasingly high demands that officials made of them. The need to supply the large milk quota meant that women tended to do more milking—often for an hour or two in the morning and the same at night. Women were paid for tasks counted as commune work, using the work-point system, but the childcare, cooking, and other household tasks they did were not remunerated in this way. The short-lived experiment with communal cooking arrangements during the GLF had little effect on those living in pastoral encampments, generally too far from brigade centres to travel there for meals, and women continued to cook for their own families. As the livestock numbers rose during the commune period, people had to work with more animals (although consuming fewer of them), and this led to a greater burden of work for both women and men. Furthermore, the introduction of compulsory education took children away to schools in the settlement for much of the year, and their labour was lost to pastoral households. Adult women and men were left with proportionally more work to do themselves.

Hard work for the commune was encouraged with the award of honorific titles to both men and women, such as *hödölmöriin baatar*[111]– 'hero of labour'. One such award-winner was Dulmaa, whose speciality was shearing sheep, a task carried out by women and men in late spring. She was particularly proud of her speed. She could shear twice as many sheep as most people, she said. Usually a young man would assist by catching the sheep, so that a woman who finished a sheep would point to the next one she wanted, and the lad would catch it and bring it to her. But Dulmaa could not, she said, tolerate the delay and so caught the sheep herself, and sheared it on the spot.

Pay was allocated to the commune members using a system of work-points—*gong fen*– in Chinese, or *hüts'* (meaning 'shares') in Mongolian. The production brigade was generally the accounting unit for the allocation of these points, and brigade members earnt a number of work-points each day depending on the type and quantity of work carried out.[112] These rates were not based on the prices paid by the state for animal products, but on the administration's own valuation of the various tasks. They reflected notions of paid labour which excluded childcare and housework, and the work-points given for women's work usually amounted to a lower daily total than that of the men. Most women would earn something like 8 points per day for milking in the morning and evening and herding some livestock near the encampment, whereas men would typically earn about 10 points on average for their daily work. However, as the number of work-points earnt was based upon the

[111] *Kodelmyn-yn bagator*, classical transliteration.

[112] The valuation of tasks and numbers of points paid varied somewhat from commune to commune, but I give rates my informants considered typical.

number of animals milked or herded, these daily totals varied a good deal, and by doing more work one could earn higher rates. The fee for eight or nine cows, for example, was about 3 points for each milking; and those families entrusted with fewer commune animals could not earn as many points. Shearing the sheep (with hand-shears) was paid at a rate of around 1 point for a large sheep. This earned most shearers about 10 extra points per day at shearing time, although those—like Dulmaa—who did more sheep would get proportionally higher rates. Women, particularly the younger ones without children, would also herd the lambs and kids near the encampment, and earn an additional 3 or 4 daily points or so this way.

Herding a medium-sized herd of adult animals, a typical male job, would usually provide around 8 to 10 points or so per day, depending on the type of animal, the number, and the conditions. Men might also earn some more points doing shearing, or watching the flocks at night during the lambing season, for example. Seasonal tasks that were considered particularly heavy or demanding were paid at a higher level of around 15 points per day. The men taking horses on the winter *otor* (movement to distant pastures), for example, were paid at this higher rate as it involved them living away from home, continually shifting a makeshift temporary camp as they moved the horses long distances, often in freezing conditions. In late summer, hay-cutting was another task that was done by men and paid at around 15 points a day. Again, this generally involved living in a temporary camp away from the comforts of the home encampment, and cutting and loading hay (often by hand, sometimes with horse-drawn machinery) from dawn to dusk. One or two women would usually accompany the teams to the hay-making pasture to work as cooks, and this would earn them a similarly high rate.

Most working adults earned between 2,000 and 3,000 work-points a year under this system, whilst the best workers could earn over 3,500. However, because of the different capabilities and opportunities of actual households the number of points they earnt varied a great deal. Young couples with several young children could easily fall behind and get into debt, having more outgoings than work-points. Illness was a particular danger for such poor families; one informant recalled an especially difficult time in the commune when he and his brothers and sisters were at school, and his father became sick. Families such as his had very poor clothes, he said, sometimes they would not have enough to buy basic goods and had to borrow salt or tea from their neighbours, hoping to be able to repay them sometime in the future.

The work-points represented shares of the brigade's income. The amount of money they were worth varied from year to year with the amount of animal produce sold and the price given for them by the state, but an exchange rate of between 8 and 10 work-points to the yuan was not unusual, and (in theory) this should have paid an average pastoralist a few hundred yuan a year. The procedure to turn work-points into money involved seeing three

officials; first the brigade head, who authorized the payment, then the bookkeeper who recorded it, and then the treasurer who approved it. In reality members of the brigade were frequently unable to receive their theoretical entitlement to cash. As a result of mismanagement, or because of a bad year, some brigades could not pay the full fee to all their members. A family might have saved 3,000 points by the end of the year, and be theoretically entitled to 300 yuan, but the brigade would not have the cash to pay them more than two-thirds of the amount. So the brigade would make a note, keeping the unused work-points on record as credit (described by the Mongolian term *sunj*, 'to extend'.[113] This was a common problem, and people would accumulate this credit from year to year. Other families would accumulate a debt.[114] However, if their relationship with the officials or their political credentials were sufficiently good, they would receive some cash income from the brigade on credit, thus further reducing the amount of money available to pay the families that were owed cash.

Goods that were rationed by the commune itself (principally flour and meat) could be bought with work-points 'on account', without the need to translate the costs into actual cash first. These accounts would be kept by the *uyagtalan bodogch*,[115] the brigade's bookkeeper. Meat would be rationed at the beginning of winter, and the amount varied from place to place, year to year. After the high point of collectivism during the GLF had passed, this ration could be supplemented by the households slaughtering some of their private livestock, and altogether this usually totalled a few kilos of meat per person per month. The state provision of flour was more uniform, typical monthly rations were 14 kilos (28 *jin*) of flour and 3 kilos (6 *jin*) of fried millet (*shar budaa*) for those over the age of 14, with smaller rations for younger children.[116] Most other goods (if available) were bought from the local shop using cash.

The People's Communes could vary the payments it gave its members, depending on their political status. At the high point of the Cultural Revolution (1969–70) and during the campaigns against Lin Biao and 'revisionism' in the early 1970s, 'punishment points' (*yalny hüv'*)[117] were introduced. These points were deducted from the work-point totals of those considered to be enemies of the regime—principally the four types of *muu am'tan* ('evil creatures'—herdlords, rich herdsmen, counter-revolutionaries, and rightists). These national political movements also led to the introduction of 'attitude points'.[118] Those thought to have the correct political attitude were given extra work-points, thus reducing the share of brigade income that everybody else received. The attitude points were not popular, however, and the scheme was withdrawn after a year or so. Whatever the formal accounting mechanism, however, their political status continued to affect a family's income. Despite its reduction by various means, if the work-point account of a *muu am'tan* family was positive they would rarely gain more than a little cash, which was always in demand by those with better political credentials. A family that I knew bitterly remembered one year when they were not allowed to withdraw more than 1.5 yuan each to celebrate the *Chagaan Sar* (New Year) festival, despite having saved work-points worth over 2,000 yuan.[119] Only in 1978/9 was there a general settlement of these work-point accounts. Theoretically those with debts had to make them up, and those with credits gained animals or some other asset. As usual, this policy was implemented in slightly different ways in different places, and informal agreements were often reached between account holders to settle the differences.

By the end of the GLF, pastoral Inner Mongolian society had been radically reorganized. The Party could claim that since collectivization virtually nothing was left of the pre-revolutionary relations of production or the feudal social order. Ownership, allocation, and consumption of livestock were all in the hands of collectivist institutions rather than traditional households, and pastoralists were paid for their labour, in kind and cash, by the commune. The new communist ideology was espoused at schools and regular public meetings and its major rival—Buddhism—reduced to a private, at times a secret, matter of faith. Traditional activities such as the *oboo* ceremony had largely disappeared, even traditional dress was in decline. Mass media, first the newspaper and later the radio, made even the most remote pastoral communities a compulsory audience for the political theatre conducted at the centre of the Chinese state. It might seem as if life in the new society would bear increasingly little resemblance to the old.

But, in fact, a whole series of fundamental aspects of Mongolian society had been retained. The actual operation of the pastoral household and encampment, its division of labour, the symbolic ordering of domestic space; all helped provide the frameworks for pastoral life and were not radically altered. Despite the allocation of work-points to individuals, Mongolians continued to tend to pool them and treat them as elements of household income rather than personal pay. Indeed, officials often dealt with pastoralists in terms of household membership, and what private livestock they were allowed, for example, was usually registered as belonging to domestic groups

[113] The term *sunj* would be used, for example, in the question '*ta hedu sunj bain?*' 'How much do you have held over?'

[114] The Jirem Mongol term for this is *laagdaj bain*.

[115] Transliterated *ugtalan bodugch* from the classical script.

[116] Children between 8 and 14 had a smaller ration, and children under 8 a still smaller one.

[117] Transliterated *jal-a-jin vubi* from the classical script.

[118] *Uyel sanaami hüv'*. *Yzel sanag-a jin vubi*, classical transliteration. (In Cyrillic *ujel* is written *uzel*.)

[119] At New Year a family would usually receive 40% of their accumulated credit in cash for the festival.

rather than individuals. Herding large numbers of collective animals was not, in effect, completely unlike raising the livestock of herd-owning nobles or monasteries under the old *süreg* lease arrangements (although the commune took all the products and returned rationed food and cash). Although Mongolians had been forced to adapt to the new institutions, congruent elements of an older model of social relations persisted for the next twenty-five years, to find an expression once again in the late 1980s.

The Great Famine

From 1959 to 1961, China as a whole was swept by famine, the magnitude of which only began to emerge in the late 1970s. Officials throughout the Chinese state concealed the seriousness of the disaster at the time, and it was only by analysing census data that scholars have been able retrospectively to estimate the full scale of starvation. Riskin estimates the number of deaths as between 15m. and 20m., whilst in 1981 Sun Yefang admitted that around 20m. people starved to death at that time.[120]

The policies of the GLF in 1958 and 1959 had been a damaging failure throughout China, leading to a fall in agricultural output. The leaders of the new People's Communes had often forcibly replaced tried and trusted traditional peasant methods of cultivation with doctrinaire 'modern' techniques that were advocated by the Party but that were often unsuitable to local conditions. The peasants in the People's communes frequently found themselves working on land they did not know and had no personal interest in; and a considerable proportion of the agricultural workforce had been taken off the land to work on the tiny new industrial plants that the Communes had been encouraged to build. Although foodgrain production in 1960 had fallen to 29 per cent below the 1958 level, cadres had so exaggerated the success of the new policies that the national leadership believed they had a 100m. tonnes more grain than they actually had.[121]

Pastoralists in Hulun Buir suffered severe food shortages from 1960 to 1962. In Shine Barga Left banner I was told that in one *sum* 180 people out of the several thousands who lived there, had starved to death. The *sum* I studied was not so badly affected, however, and there were no reports of anyone actually dying of hunger. In the early 1960s there was a great shortage of food throughout the IMAR—although none of the other people I knew recalled fatalities from starvation in their own districts. In Jirem *aimag* Mongolians still refer to the period as *wu liang si-nii üye* (this is a Mongolization of a Chinese term meaning 'the time of 5.4 *liang*')[122] and comes from the weight of the daily adult ration of flour or other staple during the worst years of the famine in the early 1960s. This was supplemented with some vegetables if they could be grown. In the pastoral regions they also had rationing. People tried to eat ground sorghum husks, but this (as well as having little or no nutritional value) caused serious digestive problems, typically constipation. Even the bark and leaves from trees were apparently eaten in desperation.

[120] Riskin (1987: 136). [121] Ibid. 137.

[122] *Wu liang si* is Chinese, meaning 5.4 *liang* (201.42g), *-nii üye* is Mongolian, meaning 'the time of'.

Information obtained directly from the Hulun Buir League Records Office by George Tseo has allowed me to draw Figs. 3.4 and 3.5. These statistics were not published, but were copied from the internal records of the office itself. I cannot be certain that they are accurate, but I have no reason to suppose they are not. Figure 3.4 shows the number of Mongolians in Hulun Buir league (*aimag*) and the total population of the four districts officially classified as 'pastoral banners'[123] which have long been predominantly populated by Mongolians.

Figure 3.4 shows that from 1956 to 1960 the population figures for the 4 pastoral banners fluctuated wildly. This cannot represent the natural decline and recovery of a population. It can be due only to either large-scale immigration and emigration in the region, or some errors or discrepancies in

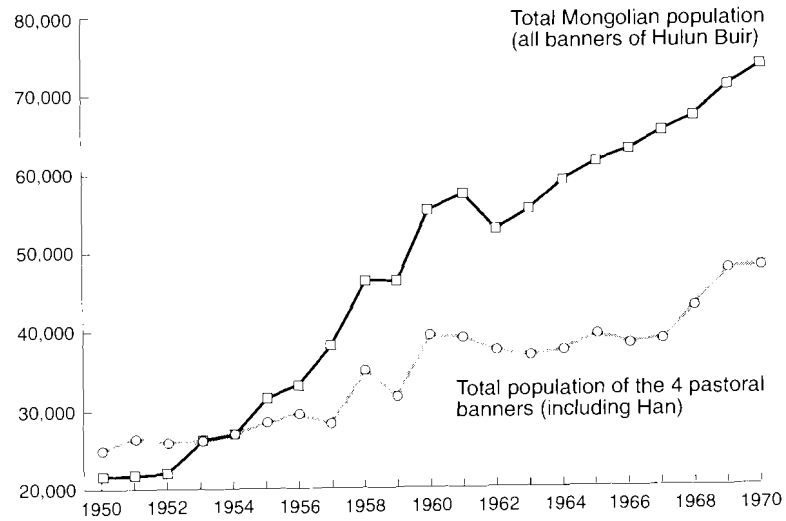


FIG. 3.4 Comparison of the Mongolian population of Hulun Buir and the total production of the four pastoral banners of Hulun Buir, 1950–70

[123] There is a total of eleven banners in the league.

the collection of the data.[124] The figure also shows a marked fall in the total Mongolian population of the entire league in 1962, and there was also a drop in the population of the four pastoral banners beginning in 1961 and reaching its lowest point in 1963. However, as both curves fall at this point these reductions bear all the hallmarks of a genuine drop in population followed by a recovery (which is more gradual in the pastoral banners, probably as a result of some Han settlers moving to other areas). These figures support the reports that some people died of hunger at that time. However, the famine in China as a whole occurred in 1959–61 and this leads to another puzzle– – the question of why this drop in population occurred in Hulun Buir about a year later than in the rest of China.

Although nationally the amount of grain produced in China was at its lowest in 1960, it was in 1962 that the actual procurement of grain by the Chinese state found its lowest level.[125] As Sen has noted,[126] famines tend to affect different groups in a population in different ways. In pastoral districts which import much of their grain it is the amount of grain available (through the government) that limits the supply of this staple food. There was less grain available for the Chinese state to send to the region in 1962 than at the height of the national famine in 1960. By Sen's scheme,[127] the actual 'entitlement' (the ability of people to command food through legal means) of the inhabitants of pastoral regions of the league probably was at its lowest around 1962.

If one examines the figures for the Han population of Hulun Buir league, shown in Fig. 3.5, we see a peak in 1960 followed by a rapid fall in both 1961 and 1962. This is too dramatic a decline to be caused principally by famine deaths (although these may have contributed in some small way), but is clear evidence of the results of policy changes initiated by Ulanhu after the failure of the GLF, described below.[128] The rate of Han immigration into the region increased between 1957 and 1960, after which the Han population declined for the next two years as a result of policy changes that led to net emigration of over 200,000 Han from the league. The Mongolian population, however, declined slightly in 1961–2, and this cannot be explained by the effects of Ulanhu's policies towards Han settlers; it may well have been the result of the food shortages that informants described.[129]

In the 1960s the state tried to justify these shortages by appealing to national pride. The Russians, it was said, had to be repaid for the loans they had given China, and as a result the whole nation, particularly the rural population, had to make sacrifices. This seems to have been surprisingly effective. Indeed, it was with some pride that Mongolian informants told the story of Zhou Enlai's disagreement with the Russians. It was said that a trainload of grain was delivered to the Russians, who arrogantly rejected it on the grounds that it was not of sufficiently high quality. Zhou would not lower himself to haggle with them. He simply ordered the entire trainload dumped into the river Hara Muren (on the Amur) and set about arranging another trainload of food. Whatever the truth of this story, my Mongolian friends were impressed, despite their own hunger, that the Chinese leadership had been able to act with dignity and a high moral tone at the international level.

[124] There do not seem to have been large numbers of people entering and leaving the rest of the *aimag* (league) at this time. There was a smooth rise in both the Han and Mongolian populations throughout the period 1956–60. It seems more likely that there were boundary changes associated with the new People's Communes or some other change in gathering data at that time.

[125] Riskin (1987: 137). [126] Sen (1981: 43). [127] Ibid. 45–51.

[128] These unofficial statistics show Han numbers in Hulun Buir dropped by 22.3% in two years.

[129] The Mongolian population fell by 7.7% during 1960–2, according to these unofficial figures.

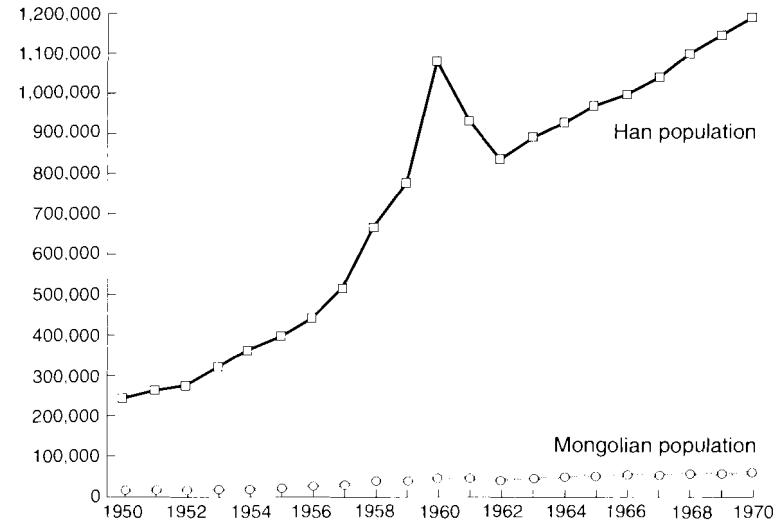


FIG. 3.5 Comparison of the Mongolian and Han populations of Hulun Buir league, 1950–70

After the Great Leap Forward

As the failure of the GLF became evident to the CCP central leadership the political tide turned. By 1960 the GLF policies had been largely discredited, and official policy advocated a 'return to normality'. The early 1960s brought a realization that the large size of the collective units was harming incentives. Individual commune members experienced very few rewards for working hard, and few penalties for slacking. As a result the collective units were made smaller, and management of the pastureland was passed to the production brigade.[130]

Ulanhu attempted to reverse the Maoist policies he found most offensive.

[130] Liu and Zheng (1983: 569).

He had been left with little choice but to implement Beijing's directives during the GLF, but he seems to have privately opposed them. Being highly sinicized and a senior member of the Han-dominated CCP he had been seen by many Mongolians as an agent of Han interests. However, by this time Ulanhu had learnt Mongolian (it is unclear how well he spoke it earlier in his career), and became increasingly involved with specifically Mongolian interests—for example, urging all Chinese cadres to learn Mongolian.[131]

The flow of Han colonists was checked, and temporarily reversed (as illustrated by Fig. 3.5). Assimulationist policies were relaxed, and Ulanhu instructed another senior Mongolian official[132] to deal with the problems of agriculture in Inner Mongolia. The result was an immediate halt to the ploughing of pastures and the start of a programme to return areas unsuitable for agriculture to grazing. The area of cultivated land was cut dramatically at this time. Fig. 3.6 shows the unofficial figures from the Hulun Buir Record Office for the area of cultivated land in the league. After an astounding leap in the extent of farmed land during the GLF, the area of farmed land plummeted sharply between 1961 and 1963. The speed with which the area of agricultural land fell reflects the determination of Ulanhu's administration to return newly cultivated agricultural land to pasture. Much of the new farmland, however, was probably unsustainable in any case. Ploughing could destroy the thin topsoil, creating unproductive sandy ground, and the remains of attempts to farm unsuitable steppe land are still visible near some

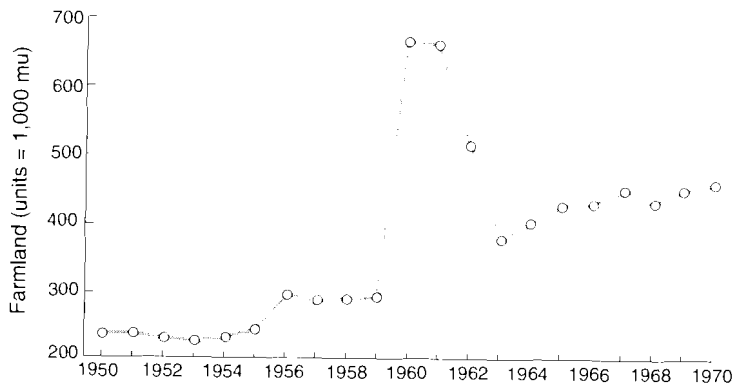


FIG. 3.6 Area of land under cultivation, Hulun Buir, 1950–70

[131] Hyer (1969: 55).

[132] Heaton (1976: 65) identifies this figure as Wang To, but Inner Mongolian friends were unable to identify him. It may well be that To or Do was only the first part of a longer Mongolian name.

sum centres.

In January 1963 Ulanhu called a special conference where he spoke in favour of increased administrative autonomy so that local problems could be properly dealt with. He concluded—in contradiction of central government policy—that agriculture should predominate only in areas that had long been agricultural, and that all other areas should be considered primarily pastoral, including the half-herding, half-farming regions.[133] Beijing then sent instructions that contradicted him and insisted that agriculture be widened.[134] Figure 3.6 suggests that after 1963 the area of agricultural land did indeed increase—but at a much slower rate.

Ulanhu's political position was noticeably different from that of Mao Zedong, who took a less favourable view of the proper place of minority nationalities. In 1958 Mao had told Ulanhu, 'the people governing a province don't necessarily have to be from that province', and 'it does not matter which nationality it is, as long as it has the truth in its hand'.[135] Ulanhu's stance placed him at the head of a powerful faction within the IMAR leadership including minority nationality cadres (most notably Tümed Mongols), and the non-Maoist or Rightist Han. In the 1950s Ulanhu had moved a number of other Tümed Mongolians from his own *nutag* (home area) into key positions of power around him. In the wake of these officials more Tümed found their way to good positions in the administration. This was another irritant to the incipient rivalry between the east and west Mongolian élites, and it meant that east Mongolian cadres tended to resent the Tümed officials, as did many Han, particularly those on the left of the Party.[136] This made Ulanhu personally, and to some extent the Tümed Mongolian cadres generally, increasingly important targets of the Maoists when the Cultural Revolution began.

[133] Hyer (1969: 56).

[134] Shirendyb and Sladkovskiy (1980: 107).

[135] Woody (1993: 12).

[136] Ibid. 2.

4

The Cultural Revolution

Mao's Cultural Revolution

When the disastrous results of his brainchild—the Great Leap Forward began to became clear, Mao, in a 1959 Central Committee Conference, had been forced to admit to making mistakes. Mao's position was weakened by the failure of the GLF, and over the next few years he withdrew from the centre of policy-making. In the early 1960s, under the guidance of Liu Shaoqi, control of the economy was returned to the planners and specialists, and the Party curbed the decentralized and politicized management policies of the GLF. Some of my informants thought that Mao must have felt at a disadvantage in the new political climate. Not an expert or university graduate himself, he had always practised a style of leadership that relied on populist movements and mass campaigns, rather than on meticulous instructions from central planners.

I was given two explanations as to why Mao advocated the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The first was that Mao was sincerely worried that the Party and government officials were becoming increasingly powerful and elevated above the workforce. This tendency, if left unchecked, could bring about the sort of revisionist regime that Mao had accused the Soviets of creating. To avoid the restratification and elitism that he feared, Mao had to bypass the Communist Party and mobilize the workers and peasants themselves against what he saw as the tyranny of the expert and the official. The other, more cynical, view was that Mao's new campaign was a vehicle for his personal interest. He had become less and less central to CCP policy-making since the failure of the GLF initiatives. Mao needed a weapon to bring down his opponents in the administration.

Mao found this weapon in China's youth, and he had at his disposal much of the Party propaganda machinery, which was full of his supporters. Over the heads of the government and Party, Mao made appeals directly to the people—and it was the young who most eagerly responded to his call. In 1965 Mao wrote his first 'big character poster' and launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. In effect it became a call for the masses to organize and overthrow the minority of Party and government officials who, Mao declared, were destroying the revolution from within by preventing mass participation in the administration, and were entrenching a hierarchy. This call, however, split the Party—and to a large extent the nation. It was generally high-school and university students who answered Mao's appeal most fervently, forming

thousands of local bands of Red Guards—the militant groups espousing passionate loyalty to Mao—and they verbally and physically attacked officials or intellectuals who opposed them. Soon rival groups of Red Guards developed, some with a membership of youths with establishment backgrounds, who fought increasingly bloody battles for control of the cities, the focal points of the Cultural Revolution.

Mao's goal was a China made up of self-reliant communes with a minimum of high-level bureaucracy to co-ordinate them. His policies decentralized the economic management of the country, but relied upon mass campaigns to guide the thousands of communes. Mao's approach was to replace central planning with an ideological consensus that united the aims of the people and their leaders everywhere. The consequence was an intolerance to differences in outlooks and approaches, especially among the cadres. Inner Mongolia was not to be allowed tailor-made policies created by local government; it had to follow Mao's national Mass Line.[1]

By 1965 Ulanhu and his supporters were potential targets for the Maoists. He was said to be too freely adapting Party policy to local conditions, and was opposed by Maoists because of his disinclination to pursue further class struggle. Ulanhu was also attacked because of the large number of positions he held. He was the chairman of IMAR, political commissar of the Inner Mongolian Military Region, first secretary of the IMAR party committee, vice-premier of the State Council of the PRC, vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the PRC (congress), and a member of the Politburo.[2] He could be portrayed as a wilful autocrat, a rightist who favoured his own Mongolian nationality and resented the control of Beijing. In 1965 the call from the Beijing government was to 'transform IMAR into a bastion to protect the citizen' and to uncover agents of Soviet-Mongol revisionism.[3] This can be seen as an ominous forerunner of the later 1968 campaign against the New Inner Mongolian People's Party, a supposed secret organization that was said to support the union of Inner Mongolia and the MPR. The CCP leadership became increasingly obsessed with the thought of disloyalty and separatism among the Mongolians.

Ulanhu was not leading a solely Mongolian faction. He had gathered around him many officials from his own Tümed Mongol background, appointing them to senior positions. But there were too few Mongolians in the region, or among the cadres, for Ulanhu's power base to be exclusively

[1] The Mass Line was a method of leadership whereby the cadres roused mass activity in accordance with Party policy. As Young (1978: 37) points out, the Maoist position was that although the cadre should be sensitive to mass opinion this should in no way be allowed to infringe upon central Party policy.

[2] Rossabi (1975: 273), Woody (1993: p. ii). Part of this list was also provided by an informant, a Han who was a former Red Guard.

[3] Shirendyb and Sladkovskiy (1980: 105).

Mongolian. Ulanhu had key support from many of the most senior Han Chinese Party and government leaders, such as Wang Yilun the vice-chairman of IMAR, and Liu Qing the deputy commander of the Inner Mongolia Military Region Political Department. Although he did make a point of delegating positions of real power to Mongolians, Ulanhu's position rested upon a pragmatic style of government which often brought him into opposition with Maoist doctrinalism, rather than solely the Mongol nationalism he was later charged with.

On 18 April 1966 the North China Party Bureau issued a statement saying that the level of political consciousness among cadres in Inner Mongolia was very low, and calling for a movement to study the thoughts of Chairman Mao. This was an indication of the increasingly hostile attitude of the CCP Centre towards Ulanhu. To pay lip-service to the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution announced in Beijing, Ulanhu and his associates passed a supportive resolution at the local Party conference and proclaimed the start of the Cultural Revolution in the regional party newspaper, the *Inner Mongolia Daily*. They even managed to dismiss a few Maoists under the pretext of the new initiative, and appointed Batubagin— a Mongol— as first secretary of Hohhot Municipal Party Committee.[4]

In May 1966 the CCP Centre's North China Bureau held a two-month meeting of senior officials concerned with Inner Mongolia, at the Qianmen Hotel in Beijing. Ulanhu became a major target. Cadres from IMAR who opposed Ulanhu, or who sensed an opportunity to benefit from the new direction of the political wind, spoke out against him, notably a Manchu party secretary, Gao Jinming. Liu Shaoqi (then vice-chairman of the CCP) accused Ulanhu of having failed to 'carry out the class struggle, in particular among the Mongolian population'. He was criticized by Deng Xiaoping (who later found himself with reason to sympathize with Ulanhu) for prioritizing economic development at the expense of class struggle.[5]

The Maoists and Red Guards read this as the go-ahead for an intensified public campaign to vilify Ulanhu, accusing him of being an enemy of Mao and opposing the Cultural Revolution (which was probably true), and wishing to restore capitalism and split Inner Mongolia from China (which was probably not true). One of the centres of Red Guard activity was at the Inner Mongolia Teachers University.[6] The campus had first been affected earlier that year when a 'big character poster' appeared in the main courtyard. The effect of this forbidden form of publicity was to bombard the whole university with its message—'Why is the regional party committee not joining the Cultural Revolution?' The controversy over this poster split the university, as so many other institutions, into two camps. The militant Maoist group was

[4] Hyer and Heaton (1968: 99–101). [5] Woody (1993: p. ii).

[6] This is an English translation of the Mongolian name (*Obör Mongolyn Bagshiin Ih Sürguul'*). The Chinese name is generally translated Inner Mongolian Normal University.

generally a minority, but much more active, campaigning and demonstrating against Ulanhu and his administration.

On 10 August Hohhot citizens clashed with Red Guards in the streets. By mid-August 1966 Red Guards from Beijing and Shanghai were also appearing in Inner Mongolia to support the local groups, travelling free on the trains. Schools, offices, and other work units had been called upon by the CCP Centre to provide them with food and accommodation. Mao's popularity and prestige was still enormous, and young people of peasant, worker, or PLA backgrounds tended to be thought of as natural allies by his followers. Red Guards were actively supported by the Maoist cadres and teachers in the region. The Maoists militants were, in fact, a minority, albeit a very vocal and influential one. They attacked the status quo which the bulk of the population had accepted, if not actively supported. But the CCP Centre was perceived to have given the Red Guards an almost free hand and their campaigns, searches and attacks on leaders led to the formation of opposing groups all over China. In Inner Mongolia the supporters and relatives of attacked officials began to mobilize groups to oppose the bands of radical youths.

Mongolians found themselves on both sides. Tümed Mongolian cadres, who tended to be identified with Ulanhu, were generally targets of the militants, particularly those in senior positions. Their natural opponents among Mongolian cadres were the Horchin and other groups from East Mongolia who had a long history of successful participation in the Chinese administration. In the early stages of these campaigns many such East Mongolians within the administration disparaged Ulanhu and his followers. However, as the campaigns to 'root out Mongol separatism' continued, almost all Mongolians in positions of authority eventually came under suspicion, and traditional Mongolian culture and religion was increasingly targeted as a possible rallying point for separatism. This meant that as the situation worsened Mongolians of all persuasions became increasingly threatened. Those Mongolians, such as Ulaanbagan and Wu Tao, that continued to participate in campaigns against 'separatists' and were protected by the Cultural Revolution leadership, generally came to be considered traitors and puppets by many Mongolians.

On 16 August the CCP Centre acted, announced that Ulanhu was a 'capitalist roader', and dismissed him from his party posts.[7] Wang Yilun was removed and Maoists in the administration began to denounce and dismiss those associated with Ulanhu. It was alleged that Ulanhu and other Mongolian cadres had plotted to split Inner Mongolia from China. In the cities some Mongolians, particularly Tümed students, sensing the increasingly ethnic hostility behind these developments, began to organize to defend

[7] Woody (1993: p. ii).

themselves.[8] They formed Red Guards, also claiming loyalty to Mao, and called for the rehabilitation of Ulanhu.[9]

The local government responded to the unrest by publishing an order in the *Inner Mongolia Daily* to suspend the Cultural Revolution because of the approaching harvest. Red Guards were told to go to the rural areas to help with the harvesting.[10] Although many Red Guards ignored the instruction, in late August the Cultural Revolution began to spread to the rural areas. A friend from Jirem *aimag*, a semi-agricultural, semi-pastoral region, noted that the Red Guards in his village were entirely Mongolian, as there were almost no Han Chinese living there. Most of them were extremely young:

> They were aged between 11 and 14, most of them. The leaders were older, 16 or so. Most of them were boys, only one or two were girls. They would blacken their faces with ash before going to peoples houses to look more frightening and difficult to recognize. They smashed everything old– windows, bowls, things in the house. They said they were attacking the 'four olds'. They often went to my uncle's house and made him memorize sentences from Mao's works. They took my aunt's jewellery, but she was from a poor background, so later the brigade leader got the boys to give it back.

From around 1966 until the 1970s there was turmoil throughout the educational system. 'Schools could not work', a Mongol teacher remarked, 'Students criticized the teachers. There were hardly any real lessons, just politics and labouring. The students held lots of meetings, and made posters. They also did work together, on buildings and things. Around 1972 and 1973 the schools improved a little, and by the end of 1975 they were mostly back to normal.'

There are reports that in Shilingol Mongolians organized resistance and on 29 August 1966 the locals apparently repulsed Red Guard incursions for seven days, killing some of them before the small revolt was put down with the help of the army.[11] This action was reportedly carried out under the slogan 'Chinese out of our country!'[12] It is difficult to know, however, if this was not another case of Maoist propaganda, fabricated or exaggerated to justify the repression of 'class enemies'.

In 1966 the disturbances in the cities continued. In September Chen Binyue, the deputy mayor of Hohhot, was seized by Red Guards, and in the

[8] On 18 August in Baotou there was, apparently, a secret meeting of Mongolians who discussed ways to warn the Mongolian population of the coming attack upon them. It is understood that members of this meeting were arrested distributing leaflets calling for Inner Mongolian independence. See Shirendyb and Sladkovskiy (1980: 113).

[9] Woody (1993: 2).

[10] Hyer and Heaton (1968: 98).

[11] Since the early 1960s troops from minority nationalities were split up and distributed evenly throughout the units in the military garrison. As the vast majority of soldiers were Han Chinese this made it highly unlikely that Mongolians could organize themselves effectively within the army. In the mid-1960s probably around 10% of the troops were Mongolians.

[12] Shirendyb and Sladkovskiy (1980: 113).

autumn the Red Guards started recruiting, forming local groups, and attempting to penetrate schools, factories, and offices. In November the University of Inner Mongolia was seriously affected and the secretary of the University Party Committee, Yue Beichen, was among a number of Mongolian academics arrested. On 2 November Ulanhu was dismissed from his remaining positions of authority and placed under house arrest, apparently in Beijing. Control of the administration of IMAR was in the hands of the regional party committee, and an *ad hoc* group led by Gao Jinming now set about directing the Cultural Revolution in Inner Mongolia.[13] The subsequent Maoist campaign was directed against Ulanhu's allies and friends, including the majority of high-ranking Tümed Mongolians, and even his wife.[14]

The local government leaders, such as Wang Yilun (a Han) and Wang To (a Mongol), reacted to the Red Guard attacks by organizing rival 'mass organizations' of their own. These were made up of local workers, peasants, teachers, and PLA veterans. Although also claiming loyalty to Mao and the Cultural Revolution these groups opposed the Maoists and clashed with the militant Red Guards.[15] In January 1967 the militant Red Guards, inspired by the January Revolution in Shanghai, attempted to seize power in Hohhot. They stormed a number of government buildings and factories, including the telegraph office, railway station, Radio Inner Mongolia, and the *Inner Mongolia Daily* presses, where there was a fierce clash with the workers defending it.[16]

Law and order had broken down, and the situation began to polarize. On one side stood the Red Guards and Maoist supporters in the administration, such as Gao Jinming. On the other side were the 'conservative' elements of the administration, most notably the commanders of the Inner Mongolian Military Region, and the pro-establishment 'mass organizations,' who accused the militants of being counter-revolutionary. Liu Qing, a military commander and alleged supporter of Ulanhu, ordered troops into Hohhot to surround the Red Guards' various headquarters. They beat some Red Guards, and clashes between troops and militants continued until 1 February, when a huge demonstration attended by 15,000 Red Guards was held, calling for the removal of Liu Qing. This was part of a vigorous Maoist campaign to have the pro-establishment officers dismissed.

On 5 February militant students were engaged in a round-the-clock demonstration outside the headquarters of the Inner Mongolian Military Region in Hohhot. With blankets and sleeping-bags they took turns in the freezing winter weather to block the main gate. The army officers became increasingly angry. One of the students, Han Tong, was using a megaphone

[13] Woody (1993: p. iii).

[14] Shirendyb and Sladkovskiy (1980: 109–11).

[15] Hyer and Heaton (1968: 56).

[16] Ibid. 102.

to direct the demonstration when an army officer drew his pistol and shot him. In the confusion that followed the Red Guards rushed Han Tong to a hospital where he died. Chaos ensued, and the local military could no longer keep order. The administration decided it needed reinforcements and Liu Qing ordered army units stationed near the border with the MPR to converge on Hohhot and restore order. They reoccupied all the facilities held by the Red Guards, arrested over 100 of them, and seized their propaganda equipment.

The Maoists appealed to the CCP Centre, and Zhou Enlai summoned representatives from all parties together for talks in Beijing, which continued for two months.[17] In Hohhot a huge funeral was organized for Han Tong, which was attended by Maoist revolutionary organizations from all over IMAR. The military hedged the mourners in with trucks, but did not attempt to interfere. Han Tong's body, important evidence in the Beijing negotiations, was later smuggled away and successfully hidden by militant students before being taken to Beijing. Towards the end of the month there was a short-lived truce in Hohhot, which included the release of those arrested by the military, but it ended with the Red Guard leaders back in jail by March.[18]

The local army garrison continued to restore order, even sending a unit to arrest some of the Red Guards who had gone to Beijing.[19] This step must have further convinced the CCP Centre that the Inner Mongolian military was now acting with too much freedom. It must have appeared that the local PLA, and elements of the administration of Inner Mongolia, had effected an alliance against the militant Red Guard organizations, and were exercising a certain level of independence from the rule of Beijing. The Centre took steps to bring the Inner Mongolian Military Region to heel. In April 1967 the Military Affairs Committee ordered the Beijing general Teng Haiqing to take command of Inner Mongolian Military Region (apparently with the support of the 21st Army from the neighbouring province of Shensi).[20] There are no reports of clashes between Inner Mongolian troops and General Teng's men, but the local garrison refused to receive Teng, and he was forced to set up a separate HQ in the Railway Bureau. The CCP Centre concluded the Beijing negotiations on 13 April, issuing a formal policy document on the problems of Inner Mongolia. They criticized the Inner Mongolian PLA commanders, and vindicated their militant opponents.[21]

[17] Woody (1993: p. iii). [18] Hyer and Heaton (1968: 104).

[19] Woody (1993: p. iv).

[20] Hyer and Heaton (1968: 122–4) suggest that some or all of the 21st Army moved into the region to support Teng at this time, and this is in line with the account of one informant. However, the authoritative Woody makes no mention of the 21st Army at all, and Shirendyb and Sladkovskiy (1980: 116) imply that the 21st Army moved into IMAR after October 1967, which would be around the time that Teng formed the Revolutionary Committee.

[21] Woody (1993: p. iii), suggests that Teng was appointed to his new command after the Centre issued the policy document, but Hyer and Heaton suggest it may have been earlier.

When General Teng arrived, Maoist students at the late Han Tong's university were occupying the campus and preparing to defend it against the army, who had surrounded the buildings with armed troops and vehicles. Informants recall the jubilation among the militant students when Teng announced that the CCP Centre had found in their favour, and ordered the troops to withdraw. The students, and the other militant organizations of the 'masses', were invited to send representatives to join the new IMAR Revolutionary Committee Preparatory Group under General Teng. This did not please everyone. There were reports of clashes between troops and groups described as Ulanhu's supporters, the biggest being on 25 April and 10 May.[22] On 26 May the CCP Centre made a formal change to the military status of Inner Mongolia, reducing it to a Military District subordinate to the Beijing Military Region so as to control it more directly.[23]

In 1967 much of China was riven by violent struggles between rival mass organizations, which in some regions bordered on outright war. Mao and the CCP centre were forced to call upon the PLA to restore order. In early September 1967 Mao issued a directive to this effect, calling upon the mass organizations to submit to the military. In the place of the fragmented provincial administrations, Revolutionary Committees were created to control local government. In effect the army dominated these committees and they were the means by which the military continued to govern.[24]

The Inner Mongolian Revolutionary Committee was formed on 1 November 1967, led by General Teng Haiqing, Gao Jinming, and Major-General Wu Tao (a Mongolian PLA political commissar). This new leadership launched movements to 'cleanse the ranks' and 'uproot Ulanhu's sinister line and eliminate his pernicious influence'. This renewed the pressure on those cadres associated with Ulanhu's administration, particularly Mongolians; and it seems also to have been a means of purging the more radical militants who remained disaffected.[25]

So far the impact of the Cultural Revolution on Inner Mongolia was less severe than in some other regions of China. Rival Red Guard factions had not become well armed—as happened in some parts of the country—and relatively few people had been killed. Up to this point the most severe disturbances had generally been in the cities, but now the movement to 'uproot and eliminate' intensified the hunt for 'traitors' throughout the region. In addition to the rural Red Guard bands that had already formed, urban Red Guards began to arrive in some pastoral districts, sometimes bringing Mongolians from other areas to assist them in their efforts to uncover 'bad elements' by force. This often amounted to brutal attacks upon those

[22] Military officers reported that their troops were also subject to a campaign intended to corrupt them by means of 'the fair sex'. Apparently contact with, and letters from, women had influenced many of the men, and Ulanhu was also blamed for this 'subversion': Hyer and Heaton (1968: 97).

[23] Woody (1993: p. iv). [24] Woodward (1978: 73). [25] Woody (1993: pp. iv–2).

associated with the pre-revolutionary leadership, including lamas. Those who were, or had been designated, rich, and religious figures were 'struggled' against. This meant that their homes might be ransacked and searched, and they might be taken to 'struggle meetings', to be publicly harangued, humiliated, abused, and beaten, sometimes to death. The local Mongolians were expected to comply with the Red Guards' demands. There was a markedly ethnic hatred associated with much of these activities. In most regions the Red Guards were predominantly Han Chinese and tended to suspect the Mongolians as a group.

The Campaign against the Nei Ren Dang

The Revolutionary Committee's control of Inner Mongolia brought to the foreground an issue that united Han Maoists and military— the danger of Mongol separatism. Those alleging that Ulanhu had headed a secret Mongolian separatist organization, in collusion with Soviet and Outer Mongolian governments, found instant favour with the new administration. Teng Haiqing and Gao Jinming both encouraged an east Mongolian cadre named Ulaanbagan who headed a group dedicated to 'dragging out traitors' to denounce and struggle against those he accused of Mongolian separatism and other evils. Mongolian groups attempted to answer such allegations with counter-accusations of their own against Ulaanbagan, who had himself been part of Ulanhu's administration, and apparently an important member of the old East Mongolian Autonomous Government.[26] In December 1967 the Inner Mongolia Federation of Literary and Art Circles 'Overturning Rivers and Seas' Fighting Force printed 40,000 copies of a poster denouncing 'the turncoat Ulaanbagan'. But Teng Haiqing and Gao Jinming protected Ulaanbagan, who was able to denounce most of his outspoken critics.[27]

Ulaanbagan gave the dominant anti-Ulanhu faction exactly what it wanted –'evidence' of an enemy organization, and the Revolutionary Committee leadership do not seem to have been able to resist the impulse to believe in it. Ulaanbagan announced that the Inner Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party had not simply dissolved around 1947 as had been thought.[28] It had continued to exist as a secret Mongolian separatist party, infiltrating the local government, Party, and military. Led by Ulanhu, the 'New Inner Mongolian People's Party' (as it was supposedly named) was committed to splitting Inner Mongolia from China and merging with the MPR. It was in league with the Soviet and MPR governments, and clearly

[26] U. Bulag (1995), personal communication. [27] Woody (1993: 11).

[28] Rupen (1964: 481); and Woody (1993: 8); give the date of dissolution of the Party as March/April 1946, but several local informants give the date as 1947, which is also mentioned by Woody (ibid. p. iv).

posed a major threat to China. In Chinese the shortened name of this party was the Nei Ren Dang.

It is almost certain that the Nei Ren Dang did not exist at all at that time. After the Cultural Revolution, in 1979, the investigation carried out by the Inner Mongolia Party Committee concluded that the case against the Nei Ren Dang had been 'trumped-up, false and wrong.'[29] However, early in 1968 the Revolutionary Committee leadership secretly arrested eight of the most senior Mongolians on the grounds that they were leaders of the Nei Ren Dang.[30] Special groups were created to interrogate these suspects, and they eventually extracted some confessions. In January 1968 the authorities announced that Ulanhu's supporters had attacked central government forces and that they had subsequently found secret caches of arms and explosives. Whether or not this was true, it served to feed the growing paranoia.

In February 1968 General Teng announced that 'The Enemy is using religion and plays upon national feeling in order to bring disaster to the great Cultural Revolution.' Religious Mongolians and surviving lamas were targeted. If they had not been smashed before, the monasteries were now ransacked, and in some places pictures of Mao were set up in place of the sacred images. The campaign to 'uproot and eliminate' accelerated, 'dragging out' further victims, such as Wang Zaitian, the deputy commander of the Inner Mongolia Military Region.[31] Such 'dragging out' was not isolated to the senior circles of the administration, but was emulated by administrative and work units throughout IMAR, who searched for suspects among their own ranks. By April General Teng and Gao Jinming had made the Nei Ren Dang the principal target of the movement to 'uproot and eliminate'.

Mongolians in positions of responsibility came under suspicion, and to be accused meant 'isolation and investigation'. This usually entailed confinement and endless questioning, often with torture. This would be carried out for days, weeks, or months until satisfactory confessions and information was forthcoming. For the accused Mongolian the problem was that simply to confess to membership was often not enough, their interrogators demanded the names of accomplices, forcing their prisoners to incriminate their friends and relatives. If the accused was agreeable enough to his or her captors to be released, they would, as an enemy of the people, usually find they had no job or were assigned the worst possible tasks. The victims had generally to rely on the charity of those who knew that to help them might be dangerous. Small wonder that many victims committed suicide.

[29] Ibid. 31.

[30] These included Buyanjav (Bujanzab), deputy director of the Inner Mongolian Military Region Political Department; Batu, vice-president of the Inner Mongolia University; Müren, president of the Inner Mongolia Medical College; as well as the deputy director of the Inner Mongolian CCP Propaganda Department, and the deputy director of the Inner Mongolia Economic Commission: ibid. 9.

[31] Ibid. 8.

With the fuel of forced confessions to feed on, the campaign against the Nei Ren Dang turned into a self-perpetuating witch-hunt. In July 1968 the enlarged third plenum of the Inner Mongolia Revolutionary Committee released a document describing the Nei Ren Dang as a vast reactionary organization secretly operating throughout IMAR, and giving instructions as to how to deal with its members. It announced that those who had used the Nei Ren Dang to avoid punishment included 'Mongol traitors, special agents, herd-owners, landlords, reactionary feudal upper-class elements, reactionary religious upper-class elements, and other counter-revolutionary elements'. It called upon the masses to attack the Nei Ren Dang. The military was also subject to this purge. The Fifth Cavalry Division in Jining, for example, was found to be almost entirely commanded by Nei Ren Dang officers—including the divisional commander. The meetings of this branch of the Nei Ren Dang were held under the auspices of the normal CCP meetings, it was claimed. Wu Tao later explained that 'in the open these are branches of the CCP, while in the dark they are branches of the Inner Mongolian People's Party'.[32] The persecution had already spread well beyond the Party by this point, however, and was felt throughout the region. Members of the Inner Mongolia Revolutionary Committee seem to have been shocked to have found out how brutal and widespread the movement had become in rural Mongolian districts. Woody (1993: 19) notes that in July or August 1968 three members of the Committee wrote to General Teng to report the population of whole villages running in terror at the sight of a vehicle that might contain a team hunting for members of the Nei Ren Dang.

Most Mongolians with higher education seem to have became victims—particularly if they knew Russian. Production team leaders and officials, primary and middle-school teachers, and anyone with a responsible position could be singled out. In this climate any display of Mongolian culture could be seized upon by the inquisitors as evidence of Mongolian nationalism and separatism. To wear a Mongol *deel* (*debel*, robe) rather than the conformist revolutionary Chinese suit was dangerous. Any worship at the *oboo*[33] that had survived earlier campaigns became impossible to continue now. Mongolians carried out their traditional ceremonies in secret or not at all. It was forbidden to hold public meetings in Mongolian, and although teaching in Mongolian never stopped, Chinese was encouraged at every level. As most Mongol intellectuals had been silenced there was little to be published in Mongolian except official documents, the *Inner Mongolia Daily*, and the works of Chairman Mao.

By December 1968 at least 130,000 people had been uprooted for supposed collaboration with the Nei Ren Dang, according to official documents.[34]

[32] Woody (1993: 8) 16–19.

[33] The ritual cairn at which traditional ceremonies were carried out.

[34] Ibid. p. iv.

Given that the vast majority of these victims were found from among the 1.5m. Mongolians in the region, this represents the 'exposure' of something like one in eight of the entire adult population.[35] In schools and universities the Red Guards, often students themselves, were particularly active, and Mongolian academics suffered accordingly. One favourite interrogation method employed by Maoists at a university in Hohhot was to take uncooperative Mongolian suspects up to the top of a four-storey building. If the victim would still not confess to Nei Ren Dang membership they were thrown off the top. Most people were killed by the drop, but one aged academic was said to have survived the ordeal—despite a broken back.

In other parts of China some clashes between rival factions continued in the first half of 1968, despite the PLA's efforts to maintain order. Mao decided to disperse the feuding urban youths and students by sending them 'down' to rural areas. In the summer and autumn almost two million young people were sent to the countryside throughout China. Many arrived in rural and pastoral areas of Inner Mongolia, supplying fresh personnel for the campaign against the Nei Ren Dang. One of those sent down was Zhou Bingjian, Zhou Enlai's niece. She later wrote to her uncle from Shilingol, describing the catastrophic effects of the witch-hunt. Zhou Enlai responded by sending a note to Teng Haiqing about the matter. In popular folklore this has become one of the reasons for the ending of the campaign,[36] but General Teng actually seems to have taken little notice of Zhou Enlai's concern.[37]

In October even Gao Jinming seems to have begun to worry at the scale and intensity of the persecution, and tried to slow the pace of the movement. General Teng was not to be put off, however; accusing Gao of inclining to the political right, he relieved him of his responsibilities. At this time China's relations with the Soviet Union, and its ally the MPR, were becoming increasingly hostile. Brezhnev had long condemned the Cultural Revolution as a 'great tragedy' and in August the Soviets had occupied Czechoslovakia. News of these international developments added to the tension as the MPR was associated with the Soviet threat, and may explain something of General Teng's ruthlessness. A military build-up began along the borders with the USSR and MPR, and the masses were mobilized to dig defensive underground installations against possible Soviet attack. Even small villages dug shelters and trenches, and in Hohhot an extensive underground complex was constructed.

In December 1968 the Revolutionary Committee issued instructions for the further expansion of the movement to rural and pastoral areas, including a

[35] In China as a whole the 1964 census shows 42.65% of the population was considered to be below working age, suggesting 800,000–900,000 adult Mongolians.

[36] In some local accounts she is described as having married a Mongolian, or as being Zhou's daughter.

[37] Woody (1993: 20).

'registration of Inner Mongolia People's Party members', creating another wave of persecution. The movement was represented using the imagery of a heroic military campaign, the official rhetoric was full of martial phrases describing 'battles to wipe out the enemy' and 'how we organized the masses to surround and annihilate the Inner Mongolia People's Party'. Newspapers carried reports, describing how admissions were obtained, such as this cited by Woody:

> [The persons subjected to interrogation would:] one, resist; two, try to be crafty; three, procrastinate; four, admit. Our techniques for dealing with them were one, struggle; two, expose; three, attack; four, encourage. Their initial admission was typically limited only to the general circumstances of their entry into the Inner Mongolian People's Party, and contained no concrete details of the party's activities . . . They would admit the existence of persons, but not speak of what these persons had engaged in . . . They would admit only superficial phenomena, and not the core of things; only falsehoods, and not the real stuff. Sometimes they would mix true and false, with the aim of blurring the demarcation between friends and foes, hoping to get by under false pretences.[38]

The publicity served to keep the anti-Nei Ren Dang campaign at fever pitch. Although in practice the movement had almost become a pogrom, the Revolutionary Committee leadership had insisted from the beginning that the movement to 'cleanse the ranks' should not be based exclusively on ethnicity. Ulaanbagan was protected because as a Mongolian he was seen as an indispensable symbol that the struggle was revolutionary rather than simply ethnic persecution. General Teng instructed activists to 'mobilize the Mongolian masses to drag out and struggle against the bad Mongolians', and to include Han as well as Mongolian targets.[39] By March 1969 the movement had uprooted a further 250,000 class enemies. Mongolians had been largely eliminated from posts in local government by this stage. Shirendyb and Sladkovskiy state that the majority of the 5,000 senior Mongolian cadres had been purged, and that in the Revolutionary Committees the real power was held by around 700 Chinese military officers.[40] In the PLA itself all Mongolian officers above the regimental level had been purged.

The total number of victims of the campaign against the Nei Ren Dang and the other movements of the Cultural Revolution was enormous. In 1979 the Inner Mongolia Communist Party Committee calculated that among the minority nationalities (about 85 per cent of whom were Mongolians)[41] more than 346,000 people were uprooted as members of the Nei Ren Dang, which represents something like one in three of the adult population (although accusations were not always confined to adults —in one banner the entire population, young and old, were accused of Nei Ren Dang membership). In this campaign, the committee noted, 16,222 people were killed, 87,188 were crippled, and over 1m. were affected in one way or other. In 1981 an official report to the CCP Centre stated that as a result of the various movements of the Cultural Revolution a total of 790,000 people were imprisoned, 22,900 killed, and 120,000 permanently injured.[42] Most of these were probably Mongolians.

Among locals the estimates of the human cost vary, and some believe them to be even higher. In 1981 Mongolian students organized a protest group calling for high-level autonomy. This group also recalled with bitterness the attack on the Mongolian Nationality in the anti-Nei Ren Dang campaign, and some students talked of the death toll being much higher than the Party's figures. In the MPR there was a published account in the early 1970s which put the number of people killed in Inner Mongolia at 32,000.[43]

Pastoralists and the Cultural Revolution

The suffering of the Cultural Revolution period has remained a vivid memory in Mongolian communities for decades after the events. The *sum* I shall call Bayan Gol,[44] for example, is a remote pastoral district in Shine Barga Left banner, Hulun Buir, but the anti-Nei Ren Dang campaign seemed to have left its mark on every family. When I first arrived there in 1988 I quickly became friends with Dorj, then 46 years old, and his wife Chimeg, who was 43. Like most of their relatives and friends, they had suffered deeply during the Nei Ren Dang campaign. They recalled that in the winter of 1967, groups of Red Guards had arrived in the centre of the commune. They were mostly Chinese, but the teams included Mongolians from other districts, they said. At this stage the main aim of the work teams was 'class struggle'. The families who had been classified as having been herdlords were subject to *temcheh* (struggle).[45] One of these was a distant relative of Chimeg, Delgerma, the wife of a herdlord – she was beaten so badly that her back never recovered, and she is now very severely deformed and hunched. Dorj recalled the incident with anger and bitterness. 'An old woman! Beaten terribly! You cannot understand it,' he exclaimed. 'Does it happen in your country? There are really bad people in China.'[46]

[38] Woody (1993: 20) 25–6. [39] Ibid. 9. [40] Shirendyb and Sladkovskiy (1980: 118).

[41] According to the 1964 census the population of Inner Mongolia was composed of 10,729,407 Hans; 1,384,455 Mongolians; 111,397 Huis; 11,248 Koreans; 50,870 Manchus; 34,604 Daurs; 9,048 Evenks; 1,203 Orochon; and 1,906 people of other nationalities.

[42] Woody (1993: 30–1, and p. vi).

[43] *Uga Zohiol Urlag*, 3 Feb. 1973, cited in Shirendyb and Sladkovskiy (1980: 120).

[44] In order to preserve the anonymity of my informants this is a fictional name for the *sum* in Shine Barga Left banner, Hulun Buir, in which I carried out fieldwork.

[45] Transliterated *temeceky* from the classical script.

[46] He used the term *dundad uls* (*dumdadu ulus*) which means middle kingdom or central country, rather than *hyatad uls* (*hitad ulus*), which would mean Han country. In this context Dorj meant the Peoples' Republic of China, and did not associate it exclusively with the Han Chinese.

Some officials who were seen as having rightist backgrounds were replaced, and the political climate in the commune became increasingly Maoist. New work schemes were organized—such as the attempt to farm the grassland to the south of the *sum* centre, where the now abandoned fields are still clearly visible. Those linked with the families of officials of the Japanese administration and rich herdsmen were given the worst and hardest jobs. For instance Chuluunbaatar, Dorj's natural brother and the adopted son of the old *sum* head, had to weed vegetable patches, cut hay by hand, and perform other tasks. He was only given two bowls of food a day for three years, and the poor diet ruined his health, he said.

When the Nei Ren Dang campaign began in 1968 things got rapidly worse. The local government (now run by Revolutionary Committees) organized investigations of local Mongolian cadres and to make matters worse a group of young Han Chinese Red Guards arrived at the commune from the city. Special arrangements were made for them while they furthered the Cultural Revolution in Bayan Gol. Chuluunbaatar recalled the period with some irony, describing the many new 'lords' (*noyod*) who emerged at that time. The Maoists, many of them quite young, dined on meat, he recalled, while herdsmen such as himself were given starvation rations.

As the movement to expose the Nei Ren Dang intensified most of the local Mongol officials were arrested. Dorj had become the accountant for the Sixth Production Brigade of the commune in 1962, and was arrested along with most of the brigade heads, such as Sodnom, the current Party second secretary. Most of the educated Mongolians were also arrested; Sodnom's brother-in-law, Bat, was a schoolteacher and was rounded up with the other suspects, as was Dorjraa, the only university-educated commune member. Together with the other prisoners from Bayan Gol, Dorj was taken to a makeshift prison in the banner centre. In this building those suspected of Nei Ren Dang membership from throughout the banner were kept. Although Dorj was quite a junior member of the production brigade staff, he was suspected because at this time his foster-father (*pator*) was still in prison, having been arrested in 1961 for earlier collaboration with the Japanese puppet government in Manchuria. The prisoners were kept crowded in a single hall, sitting on the floor with their wrists and ankles tied. They slept and ate huddled in this position, slumped against each other, for weeks. Their guards stood or sat at the other end of this room with loaded guns.

Prisoners would be periodically singled out and tortured to extract confessions and information about supposed underground activities. Several people died under torture, among them three banner officials who were beaten to death. Old Damdin explained that his younger brother, Baatar, was one of the officials who was beaten to death. Damdin keeps a small black-and-white photograph of him which he showed to me with pride, sorrow, and anger.

He pointed to it and told me to make a note of what had happened to him—beaten every day until he died of the brutality.

When Dorj's turn came he was beaten with clubs on the head and genitals as well as the legs and back. 'I'm not a Nei Ren Dang member' he would tell them over and over again. 'You are!' they would shout back, and resume the beating. Then his interrogators forced gunpowder up Dorj's nostrils and ignited it. In the end Dorj agreed that he was a member. Now they wanted names and details; and Dorj, in great pain, hardly remembers what he told them. Whatever he said must have satisfied his captors enough for them to release him after 45 days. He was displayed wearing a tall dunce's cap with his 'crimes' written on it, and had his head held over a fire whilst he was beaten again. Then he was released to find that his wife, a schoolteacher, had been visited by the local Red Guards who had cut her hair off. This had been done to a number of female teachers, such as Dorj's affine, Tuyaa. The Guards had also killed his dog. With no job Dorj and his wife entrusted their eldest son, aged 3, to relatives and went to a neighbouring commune to look for work. They hardly survived that winter, as their *ger* and winter clothing had been confiscated, but had to rely upon the generosity of friends and relatives who knew that to help them was dangerous. Sometimes Dorj talked about his ordeal with a grim humour; however, if he had been drinking the emotion of retelling the story would often fill his eyes with tears. But he was also quick to point out that some others had an even worse time of it. Bat the schoolteacher was kept in prison for four years.

At the old monastery of Ulaan Ganjur there was a production brigade where forty or fifty ex-lamas lived and kept the temple. When the Cultural Revolution began, companies of youths from the *hoshuu* centre and nearby schools arrived at the monastery with red banners, chanting such slogans as *huuchin dörbii ebdej, shine dörbii baiguulia* (Destroy the Four Olds! Establish the Four News!).[47] They called a large meeting in front of the main temple, and the head of the monastery (the *dagzar shireet*), who held the keys to the buildings, was brought from his work and had to give them up to the Red Guards. Damdin explained bitterly that they then smashed the temple and took all the silver religious things, the *burhan* (sacred images), and the lamps (*chögch*).[48] They also smashed and confiscated religious items in the homes of lamas and others. 'The lamas suffered terribly,' he recalled, 'some died, but I can't say how many.'

[47] Transliterated *tagnaan dorbi-gg ebdeju, shin-e dorb-gg bairguh-a* from the classical script. The first part of the slogan (Destroy the Four Olds) seems to have dated from the earlier Socialist Education Movement. The second part of this chant (Establish the Four News) does not seem to have been a well-known or officially sponsored slogan; it may have been misremembered or a local innovation.

[48] These were offering lamps (written *cogyce* in the classical script) that burnt before the images of deities.

After the lamas had been forced to destroy the building themselves and deface the sacred images, they were made to burn the holy books and sutras. The monastery was closed and the lamas told to return to their 'homes'—which meant in effect that many had to leave to live with relatives in the locality. The monastery was dismantled, and the materials used in construction elsewhere in the region. The livestock of the brigade was divided between the other brigades, and over the next few years many of the monks suffered further persecution at the hands of Red Guards.

The *Dagavar Shireet*, however, was a careful man. He made precise notes of all the items taken and the livestock that was reassigned, and many years later he was able to make use of these records. In the late 1980s, when he was in his sixties, a temple was re-established near the centre of Shine Barga Left banner. He considered this to be the successor of Ulaan Ganjüür, and put in a claim to the local authorities for the return of looted ceremonial objects, property, and livestock. He got a (very limited) response, but by 1988 he had managed to find a few ceremonial objects for the temple. The local government provided an eating-hall and kitchen for the monastery, and in 1989 they built accommodation for ten lamas there. A few boys were admitted to study to be lamas, and were taught Tibetan language and medicine, and a small workshop was established to make traditional medicines, following the long tradition of the original Ulaan Ganjüür monastery.

Located in the central part of Shilingol *aimag*, the district that I shall call Chagaan *sum*[49] was much closer to the *aimag* capital than Bayan Gol in Hulun Buir, and consequently was affected quite early in the Cultural Revolution, as news spread of the nearby political activity in the city. In late 1966 Red Guard units began to form in the middle school at the commune centre, almost all of them were teenagers. The Red Guards included both Mongol and Han youths, but at first their targets were mostly Mongolians in the central settlement who had bad political backgrounds. The Mongol youths were generally from poor families and therefore were thought of as having good Red credentials. One of the commune officials had been a leader under the Japanese, and the Red Guards spent most of their time 'struggling' against him.

In Chagaan *sum* it was Süren, a 49-year-old herdsman I knew, who talked most about the period, and although I knew a local Party official named Nasan-Ochir far better, he would not talk about the Cultural Revolution at all. Sodnom and the others I knew there stressed that the disturbances were relatively small until a hundred or so Red Guards arrived from China proper, and in general locals found it easiest to speak about the crimes committed by the outsiders than members of the community. In 1967 the attacks and struggle meetings spread. Sodnom was of a mixed class background himself, his mother was of herdlord background whilst his father was a poor peasant. His mother was persecuted to death by the Red Guards, he said. She died in 1969 from a disease made fatal by the misery and despair she had been made to feel. Balha and Batmönh were two friends of Süren who had been schoolteachers. They were considered particularly suspicious because they knew Russian. They were arrested at the time of the anti-Nei Ren Dang campaign. After beatings and a struggle meeting they were released with the instruction to be ready to come to another struggle meeting if called. The level of persecution varied, however. The father of one of Sodnom's neighbours, Nyamsüren, had been a banner official under the Japanese, and could have expected appalling victimization. In the end he was struggled against on one night only. At a large meeting of several hundred people in the commune centre he was criticized and made to bow, but he was not beaten.

[49] In order to preserve the anonymity of my informants this is a fictional name for the *sum* in Abagnar banner, Shilingol, in which I carried out fieldwork.

Most of the former officials were removed from office and replaced by Maoists. I was told that in 1968 the Revolutionary Committee that administered the area included only one official from before the Cultural Revolution. He was the chairman of the local militia. All the other former officials had been replaced, many by teachers of poor backgrounds who had been organizing Red Guard activity. By the 1970s almost everyone seemed to have become heartily sick of the political movements. The strident involvement of the young in these campaigns had jarred with the customary Mongolian respect shown to elders and their opinions. The shrill volubility of the political movements was at odds with the Mongolian ideal of reserve, dignity, and quiet wisdom. *Dundnur sab chalgilah aihavtar*,[50] people say 'a half-full bucket splashes terribly!' Someone with only a little knowledge wants to make a lot of noise.

The Aftermath

The Ninth Congress of the Party, held in April 1969, declared victory for the Cultural Revolution and marked its formal end, although the turmoil was far from over. During the congress Mao had reproached the excesses of some revolutionary committees, condemning arbitrary arrests and calling for those unjustly held to be released. Teng Haiqing and the Inner Mongolia Revolutionary Committee leadership reacted to the new political climate by sending a written self-criticism to Mao, which was later circulated. The CCP Centre called for the 'speedy rectification of the excesses' in Inner Mongolia.[51]

In local folklore the cessation of the anti-Nei Ren Dang campaign was associated with Zhou Enlai, the premier of the State Council of China. As a result

[50] Transliterated *dumdagur sav calgilah arxubtur* from the classical script.
[51] Woody (1993: p. v).

of the letter from his niece, the story goes, he eventually brought a stop to the movement in March. However, the CCP Centre had been attempting to rebuild stability throughout 1969, and by the time of the Congress in April Mao seems to have decided that in order to rebuild the Party it was necessary to rehabilitate the thousands of cadres attacked since the Cultural Revolution began. The international situation may have contributed to the national leadership's desire to restore a degree of political normality. In March there had been clashes between Soviet and Chinese troops on a branch of the Amur river, and such incidents continued until August.[52]

The central government in Beijing was still concerned with Inner Mongolia as a border region. In July 1969 much of the territory of Inner Mongolia was divided between other Chinese provinces. This was probably designed to improve the military administration of Inner Mongolia as an extended border region, but it also helped counter the possible threat to security that a dissatisfied Mongolian population might present. The effect of the changes was to split up the Mongolian population and reduce the size of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region to half its original area. The population living in the IMAR dropped from 13m. to 9m., with only 600,000 Mongolians now included in the region. The three eastern *aimags* of Hulun Buir, Hinggan, and Jirem (encompassing 170,000 sq. miles) were made part of the three Manchurian provinces of Heilonjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning, respectively. In the west about 65,000 square miles of Alasha *aimag* was transferred to Gansu and Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region.

In December 1969 the CCP Centre strengthened its grip on what was left of Inner Mongolia, imposing direct military control on the region by sending the 65th Corps of the PLA into the region to take over the administration. Teng Haiqing and the Revolutionary Committee leadership were purged from office and taken away, along with much of their administration, to a compulsory Mao Zedong Thought study class in Hebei. The commander of the Beijing Military Region, General Zheng Weishan, became the new head of the civil as well as the military administration of Inner Mongolia.

The national political climate that had sustained the Cultural Revolution began to change. In 1971 Marshal Lin Biao, one of Mao's seemingly most loyal and trusted colleagues, was killed—apparently when he attempted to fly secretly out of the country. It was claimed that Lin Biao was conspiring against Mao, and when his plot failed he had attempted to defect to the Soviets, but that his plane had crashed in the MPR, killing all the occupants. The shock and disillusionment of these revelations was felt throughout the nation. It became increasingly clear that factionalism and treachery had existed at the very heart of the Cultural Revolution. A new purge of the civil and military leadership was carried out, to eliminate Lin Biao's supposed

[52] Han Suyin (1976: 406).

secret organization. But many people seem to have become increasingly sceptical.

Yet another mass campaign was launched—to criticize Lin Biao and the thought of Confucius. Some local informants told me that this was Mao's method of attacking the relatively popular prime minister Zhou Enlai. The more conventional view, however, was that Mao, shocked by the desertion and death of Lin Biao, had already begun to rely on his wife and the other members of the Gang of Four; and it was they, rather than Mao, who were behind the attack on Zhou.

By the autumn of 1971 the CCP leadership felt able to withdraw the elements of the 65th Corps that had assumed military control of the banners and counties, and in 1972 the Inner Mongolian administration was returned to civilian government.[53] Although the campaigns against 'splittist elements' were largely over, an atmosphere of unease persisted in pastoral Mongolian communities in the 1970s, almost all of them had been left with a legacy of remembered accusations, personal tragedies, and bitter grudges. The various political movements had provided ample opportunities for people to further their personal quarrels and hatreds.

A friend from Jirem *aimag* told me of an incident that arose from the animosity between the brigade head of his local village and the primary school headmaster. Around 1971 another political campaign was launched, this time against 'three bad types of people'. In the past most of the victims of the various campaigns were the same old 'enemies' who had been identified in the 1940s and 1950s. These were uncontroversial targets and could be safely picked out for further persecution to demonstrate that local officials were taking the political movements seriously. This time, however, the headmaster saw an opportunity to attack the head of the brigade.

The headmaster organized the Red Guard Cadets (*Ulaan Bichihan Chereg*)[54] to chant two of the slogans associated with the campaign. '*Bürelgeen süütgeh esergüüchi-ya*' ('Struggle against wasteful expense!') they cried, and '*Niitiin yümii harliya*' ('Protect public property!').[55] The children (aged between 7 and 13) marched in line to the brigade central hall. Someone was dispatched to summon the brigade head, who was eating at the time, and he was told to come to the hall immediately.

The brigade head had been allocated a horse so that he could attend political meetings, and it was the treatment of this animal that was the main grounds for the Red Cadet's attack. The headmaster presented a large

[53] Woody (1993: p. vi).

[54] Literally 'Red Little Soldiers', transliterated *Ulagan Bichvan Cerig* from the classical script. The next stage up were the Red Guards proper, *Ulaan Hamgaalah Chereg*, for ages 13 and over.

[55] These slogans are transliterated from the classical script as *byrilgen syidkeky esergyceky*, and *neitejin jagum-a xamagalt-ya*.

character poster (*ih üseg sonin*)[56] from which he read out the charges: 'That the brigade head took no care of the People's Horse. That he repeatedly rode the Horse until it was sweating, tiring and misusing the animal . . .' There then followed a list of dates when these abuses had been seen. The poster was handed to the leader who was supposed to read the charges out himself to show he accepted them. The brigade head, however, simply screwed the paper into a ball and threw it away. He then sat down and asked his critics what they planned to do about it. They argued with him for a while and then left. Comic though this may seem, charges of this sort could cause serious trouble for those who were more politically vulnerable than the brigade leader.

This was not the end of the matter, however. Some time later the brigade head's elder brother was accused of spending too much on his daughter's wedding, and it was clear that the headmaster had not given up. These efforts prompted a bitter grudge. The headmaster's pride and joy was his large, 'four-eyed' dog,[57] which he considered to be particularly intelligent. Two years later the son of the brigade leader's elder brother was sent to guard a field of crops overnight. In the morning he reported that the headmaster's dog had entered the field and started to damage the crops, and so he had taken his sickle and killed it. The headmaster could do nothing about this a night guard was entitled to kill animals that were damaging crops.

Political campaigns continued to be announced. At the height of these movements the drum would beat almost every evening, summoning everyone to a mass meeting in the brigade hall. These usually lasted from about 6 or 7 p.m. until midnight, and were usually organized by a committee made up of one or two officials from the *hoshuu* administration and two or three from the *sum* centre. These campaigns could be particularly active during winter when there was less agricultural work to be done. The committee was generally assisted by a group of young men and a few women from the local brigade. They took part, I was told, either because they were ambitious and wanted promotion and Party work to do, or because they simply enjoyed causing trouble for other locals. The Red Guards and Cadets would generally be involved, often to sing revolutionary songs.

The old 'enemies' were generally 'struggled' again, and sometimes new culprits were found. The new culprits were usually better treated, however, and often just had to sit and explain their failings and have their faults pointed out at the public meetings. Victims were sometimes accused of some old crime that they had denied, and Red Guards might try to force them to admit

[56] A direct Mongolian translation of the Chinese *Da zi bao*. Transliterated *jeke yeye sonin* from the classical script.

[57] *Dorbon nudtei nohai* (transliterated *dorben nidytei novai* from the classical script) is an expression for a dog with two yellow spots above the eyes, thus giving the appearance of four eyes. Such dogs are often highly prized.

it (a former official, for example, was always asked where he had hidden his gun before 1947—a gun he had sold). Often the victim had to assume the 'aeroplane' position (standing bent double with arms raised at their sides) and stay that way. As the pains in their back and arms increased the victim would tend to straighten somewhat, and then activists in the crowd would shout *böhii* (bend over!).[58] After two or three hours they usually let the enemies go—often back to unpleasant nightwork they had been assigned, such as digging manure. Then the brigade leader would repeat the work schedule for the next day.

During one of the campaigns a copy of Chairman Mao's work, in four volumes, was to be supplied to every home. The ritual presentation of these sacred items took place in the brigade hall and involved householders filing to the front to collect the books, holding a picture of Mao before them. One old 'enemy' dropped the paper, and when he picked it up did not notice, in the poor light, that it was upside down. When he appeared at the front of the hall the inverted image of Mao was taken to be an act of subversion. He was savagely beaten, and was 'struggled' for several days.

Eventually, however, the political tide turned. In January 1976 Marshal Zhu De, the commander of China's PLA, died, and this marked the beginning of the final stage of the Cultural Revolution's aftermath, the 'Death Phase' as local informants called it. In quick succession the three most powerful leaders of China died. A few days after the death of Marshal Zhu De, the prime minister Zhou Enlai died, and by early September Mao himself was dead.

In April 1976 the Qing Ming festival (a traditional time to pay respect to the dead) brought a huge number of people to Tiananmen square to mourn Zhou Enlai. The memorial meeting for the dead prime minister formed the excuse for crowds to demonstrate their regard for him, and their tacit disapproval of the nation's present leadership, and the demonstration was suppressed. Deng Xiaoping, who although purged during the Cultural Revolution as a 'capitalist roader' had recently risen to high office, was said to have encouraged the demonstrations, and the Maoists had him dismissed. In fact the Gang of Four and the remaining Maoists were becoming increasingly unpopular within the Party, and were soon blamed for the excesses of the Cultural Revolution. Later in 1976 they were arrested, and eventually put on trial for their crimes. After the complex manœuvring for leadership that resulted, Deng Xiaoping finally gained power in late 1978, and China entered a new era of reform.

The Pastoral Economy

The People's Communes remained intact throughout the Cultural Revolution and the period of control by the Revolutionary Committees and the military.

[58] Transliterated *bokyi* from the classical script.

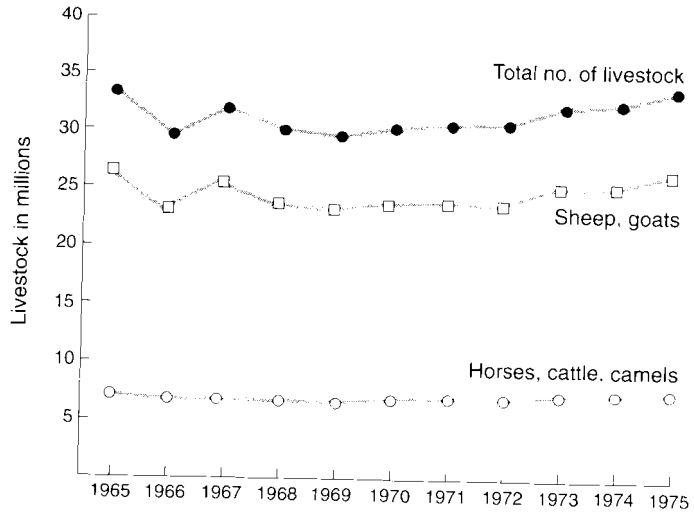


FIG. 4.1 Livestock totals in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, 1956–65

Figure 4.1 shows that in 1966 there is a fall in livestock numbers, but this is recovered the next year and until around 1967 the disruption caused by Red Guard activity had been largely confined to the cities and large towns, and pastoral regions were less affected. The movement to 'uproot and eliminate', and the anti-Nei Ren Dang campaign, however, did have a huge impact on the pastoral population. In addition to this, in 1968 the communes collectivized all the private livestock that had been allowed to herding households for their subsistence. One would expect that these two disruptive factors would have had a negative impact on livestock totals. The official figures do show a small but noticeable drop at this time, but it is not as dramatic a fall as one might expect given the scale of human suffering. Although Fig. 4.1 shows a depression in the number of animals in IMAR between 1968 and 1972, this can also be seen as part of a general trend. The livestock totals in the region appear to stabilize at around 30m. in the early 1960s and have fluctuated around that level until recently. The slight dip in herd totals is not particularly marked in view of this levelling off of animal numbers. It may be that the true scale of livestock losses was not reflected in the official statistics, and that officials have concealed the true level of disruption at this time. Locals reported that in Shine Barga Left banner livestock totals fell over the following eight years by 340,000 from the high point of 910,000 reached in 1968. There are reports that in the IMAR as a whole livestock numbers decreased by a dramatic 40 per cent between 1968 and 1969.[59] Whatever the

[59] Longworth and Williamson (1993: 46).

true totals, the pastoral economy had now been entirely collectivized, indeed its management had largely been in the hands of cadres rather than private owners for a decade or so by this time. Livestock totals continued to reflect administrative rather than individual interests.

The Legacy of the Cultural Revolution

Pastoral Mongolians had been subjected to a series of violent attempts to remake their culture. As well as confusion and chaos, the Cultural Revolution marked the high point of assimilationalist state policies and brought a general attack on Mongolian nationalism, traditional customs, and religion, and any remnant of pre-revolutionary thinking. Using education and the mass media, the Maoist state had declared war upon everything associated with the old society. The result was the apparent loss of many of the distinctive characteristics of Mongolian culture. The popular practice of Lamaism was finally eradicated, traditional dress disappeared from most areas of Inner Mongolia, the expression of a Mongolian national identity became impossible, and public opposition to Maoism became almost unthinkable. This was a demonstration of the power of the state to force compulsory change on Mongolian society. However, as history has shown, most aspects of that change were far from permanent.

By the 1980s the Cultural Revolution was generally perceived to have been a disaster, and officially it was all but recognized as such. The question as to what extent people really believed the propaganda at the time is difficult to answer, even for some of those involved. Certainly there were people who seemed happy to believe the radical slogans and amplify them at the local level to attack people they did not like. One of the most enduring results of this period of Inner Mongolian history was the sharpening of ethnic hostility. Mongolians were the victims of the anti-Nei Ren Dang campaign, and it was largely Han Chinese who were blamed for organizing their suffering. It created a strong distrust, even hatred, of the Chinese on the part of many Mongolians, and a deep pool of bitter memories.

5

Rural Reform and the Post-Collective Period

Introduction: China's Economic Reforms

The third plenum of the eleventh Central Committee of the CCP, held in December 1978, saw the beginning of a new departure in the history of the Communist administration of China. The Maoist vision of the economy was replaced by Deng Xiaoping's pragmatic policies for modernization. The Central Committee lessened direct Party control of the economy, and increased the power of the heads of the work units. Discussion began as to the reform of the People's Communes, with the aim of increasing material incentives for good work. Reformers such as Chen Yun (and later Zhao Ziyang) emphasized 'the principle of distribution according to work'[1] and in 1979 the Rural Responsibility System was approved, the first step towards decollectivization.

The first step was to make the Production Team more independent, and soon the communes were being encouraged to contract out certain production to individual households. In September 1980 the Party Central Committee described the *baogan daohu* Household Responsibility System whereby the People's Communes contracted out all the land to individual households who paid an agricultural tax and fulfilled a quota set by the State. Production in excess of the quota was bought by the commune at a higher price, and this was designed to act as an incentive to raise production. The prices paid for agricultural products were increased—grain by 20 per cent, for instance—and this was also an attempt to increase incentives for rural productivity. In traditional fashion these new administrative systems were technically voluntary, but cadres knew that they were actually obligatory, and this is reflected in the speed with which the proposals were adopted. In 1981 45 per cent of communes had implemented the Household Responsibility System, and a year later this figure had risen to 93 per cent.[2] The result of these reforms was an increase in agricultural output, an unprecedented 7.9 per cent annual average growth rate of agricultural production between 1979 and 1984, according to official statistics, compared with the 3.2 per cent that was averaged annually in the 26 years from 1952 to 1978.[3] There seems to be every reason to think that this improvement in agricultural performance was

[1] CPC Central Committee (1984: 24). [2] Riskin (1987: 287–8).
[3] Wang Gui-chen *et al.* (1985: 5).

a genuine one, and there is no doubt that rural incomes have seen a real increase.[4]

In December 1982 China adopted a new constitution; the administrative units of local government became the *xiang* townships, as they had been before collectivization, and the People's Communes disappeared over the next few years. Central government felt that the communes had imposed irrational boundaries for production and exchange, and that concentrating political and economic authority in the hands of commune officials damaged productivity. In 1985 the reforms went further, and Zhao Ziyang announced that quotas for agricultural produce would be phased out, and except for grain and cotton, agricultural prices should be set by the market.[5] China's reforms have brought attendant problems, however, such as inflation. The newly instituted market raised the price of consumer goods, and urban incomes had to rise.

The Political Climate in Inner Mongolia

Ulanhu was among those in the new national Chinese leadership who had been condemned during the Cultural Revolution. He was rehabilitated at about the same time as Deng Xiaoping in 1973. It seems that their experiences during the Cultural Revolution had helped forge a good relationship between the two men, and in 1977 Ulanhu became a Politburo member. His influence soon became apparent. In 1978 the CCP Central Committee issued a document stating that the New Inner Mongolia People's Party simply did not exist, and in 1979 the Inner Mongolia Party Committee officially declared that the cases against Ulanhu and the Nei Ren Dang had been unjust, false, and fabricated, overturning the verdicts against those accused. Also in 1979 the parts of Inner Mongolia that had been hived off to neighbouring provinces were restored, and IMAR regained its original territory.[6]

In the same year Ulanhu's son Buhe was appointed to the Standing Committee of the IMAR Communist Party and became first secretary of the Hohhot Municipality. In 1983 he was appointed chairman of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region.[7] Ulanhu himself continued his rise in the People's Republic of China (PRC) Centre and that year became the vice-president of China (a post he held until shortly before his death in 1988). The return to power of survivors of Ulanhu's faction marked an attempt to reverse the policies of the Great Leap Forward, and the Cultural Revolution decade. Most visible of these changes was the reintroduction of the pre-collective names for administrative units such as the *sum* and *gachaa*.

Buhe, in becoming the formal head of the IMAR local government, might appear to have inherited his father's mantle, but in reality had nothing like

[4] Travers (1984: 243–5) and Riskin (1987: 292–3) agree that rural living standards rose dramatically.
[5] Riskin (1987: 299–301). [6] Woody (1993: p. vi). [7] See Bartke and Schier (1985).

as much power as Ulanhu had held before the Cultural Revolution. The new CCP leadership instituted a separation of administrative, military, and Party posts in Inner Mongolia; and the most important position of party secretary was given to a Han, Zhang Shuguang. However, the 1980s also saw the rise of Ulanhu's other children to senior positions in the administration, causing some to describe them as Inner Mongolia's royal family. The rise of other Tümed Mongolians of Ulanhu's Yün clan at this time, such as Yün Shiying (who became the vice-chairman of IMAR and head of the Public Security Bureau) illustrated the importance of personal networks and patronage for the new leadership.

Several of Ulanhu's old policies were revived. The official patronage of Mongolian culture and language was reinstated, as was some measure of the early administration's tolerance of Lamaism. Several monasteries reopened and small numbers of lamas and worshippers began to return. The new administration also revived their advocacy of pastoralism, portrayed as the primary economy of both the region and the Mongolian nationality. In 1986 the region's Party Committee took up the slogan 'encourage animal husbandry',[8] and in the early 1980s the grassland management regulations echoed Ulanhu's policies of the early 1960s in specifying that lands unsuitable for farming had to become pasture or forest once more.[9] However, the real results of this policy change were not an unmitigated success. Mongolians I knew from Chifeng complained that in some cases they had been forced by local cadres to turn perfectly good agricultural land into pasture for animals, despite the fact that the land had been farmed for generations. This demonstrates that an important characteristic of the Chinese state remained unchanged by the reforms. Local officials still struggled to fulfil central government directives, sometimes at the expense of local interests.

One of the most important ways in which the Inner Mongolian government's new emphasis on animal husbandry was expressed was in pricing policy. In the 1980s the official prices of animal products, paid by the state, increased at least as fast as those of agricultural commodities. Between 1979 and 1985 the buying price of wool increased by 20 per cent, mutton by 35 per cent (from 1.36 to 1.83 yuan per *jin*),[10] and beef by 56 per cent (from 1.20 to 1.87 per *jin*). This led to a rapid increase in the cash incomes of herdsmen. Informants agree that the prices paid for their produce did increase quickly throughout the 1980s; on the other hand, they pointed out that as the prices of all the products that they needed also increased, the rise in cash income did not accurately reflect the rise in Mongolian living standards. Having said this (and although living standards did not treble in the 1980s in the way that their cash income did), all informants agreed that pastoral life

[8] Hao Fan (1987: 323). [9] Deng Shulin (1987*b*: 64–8), citing Buhe.
[10] The *jin* is a unit of mass equal to 0.5 kg.

generally became much better, with more money and a greater variety of commodities available to buy with it.

The Reform of the Pastoral Economy

The People's Communes in Mongolian regions were replaced as the unit of local government by the *sum*, a nominal return to the administrative system that existed before the GLF. The production brigades became districts of the *sum*, and were now generally termed *gachaa*,[11] but the areas included in these administrative divisions seem often to have remained the same, only their names changing.

In 1978–9 there was a general reckoning of work-points in the communes; those with debts had to make them up, while those with credits gained animals or some other asset. This process was carried out in different ways in different places, and sometimes informal agreements were reached to even out the accounts. In the early 1980s three different systems were tried in the region, and were known by their Chinese names. The *baoxu daohu* system involved contracting the herds to individual households; the *muxu zuojia chengbao* method contracted the herds at a fixed price; and the *shengxu zuojia daohu siyou siyang* system contracted the herds at a fixed price for private ownership and individual raising.

Since 1979 pastoral production could be contracted out, under the control, accounting, and planning of the brigade. In some communes a number of households (10 or so, for example) were allocated certain livestock and resources, and had to fulfil a contract to supply the brigade with a quota of produce. What they made in excess of this quota was their own. In the early 1980s the groups were made smaller (about 4–6 households) and the quotas reduced. This allowed some opportunistic officials and well-connected families to gain the best pastures, wells, brigade buildings, hay-making land, and machinary at this early stage, by 'contracting' them from the commune. When privatization proceeded in 1984 these assets often passed to the households in these groups. The division of commune assets began to be implemented in 1981 and had been completed almost everywhere by 1985. Although the official language still used such terms as 'contract' and 'lease', in effect livestock could be treated as the property of households, along with most of the machinery and equipment. In some cases this was done by extending special loans with which the property could be purchased, with the understanding that the loan could then be gradually repaid. At this early

[11] *Gacag-a*, classical transliteration. This was also the name of a pre-revolutionary administrative unit of the same approximate size. In some regions the *gachaa* is divided into a number of *bag*s. These small administrative divisions of about ten households should not be confused with the pre-revolutionary *bag* which was larger.

stage, however, the pastures of each *gachaa* continued to be communal in most regions, with access to them regulated by officials.

The result of slightly different policies being applied at different rates, was a good deal of variation; and it seems that no two places carried out reform in quite the same way. Both Chagaan *sum*, Shilingol, and Bayan Gol *sum*, Hulun Buir, divided the livestock belonging to the production brigade between the members of the brigade on the basis of a more or less equal number of animals per person. However, in both cases many local officials and their families managed to acquire most of the machines, buildings, and prime hay-making sites for themselves, and it seems that this was a general tendency of the reform process. Another factor that contributed to the variation was that in some areas a number of households had been classified as 'specialist households' and given contracts to breed specific types of livestock, such as horses or cattle.[12] They were allocated whole herds of livestock and could later buy them using loans. It was usually minor officials, or their families and friends, who were given such contracts.

In Bayan Gol *sum*, Hulun Buir, the herds were not divided until 1983. In the 6th district[13] (which included Dorj and most of my informants) each household received 50 sheep and goats, 4 cows, and 3 horses for each adult. Bayan Gol is a relatively rich *sum*, however, and in many regions the number of animals distributed to each brigade member was less. In neither Bayan Gol nor Chagaan *sum*s was the livestock purchased from the commune with loans—the distribution of livestock was free of charge.[14]

By the mid-1980s the scheme that finally emerged from the various reform policies was known as the Double Contract Responsibility System (*shuang chengbao*). The name indicates that the household contracted to meet quotas and pay taxes and loan repayments in return for the ownership of the allocated livestock, and the use-rights of an allocated amount of pasture-land. The thinking behind this policy was that if individual households took responsibility for their own grazing land it would be in their interests to maintain it and prevent damage to the pasture by overgrazing. As such it closely resembled models of pastoral development that had been advocated by Western development economists in the Third World.[15] This school of thought, influential in the 1970s, identified overgrazing as a major cause for

[12] Hao Fan writes that in a survey of 4 *sum*s in Horchin Right Wing Front banner as many as 112 households had specialized in cattle-breeding, 74 in horse breeding, and a further 899 households raised sheep, out of a total of 2,600 herding households.

[13] Formerly the 6th production brigade.

[14] Some of these arrangements are also discussed by Longworth and Williamson (1993: 98–9).

[15] The Botswana Government 1976 Paper 2, 'National Policy on Tribal Grazing Land', is a clear example of such policies. It quotes the speech of 28 March 1975, by the president of Botswana, Sir Seretse Khama: 'Under our communal grazing system it is in no one individual's interest to limit the number of his animals. If one man takes his cattle off, someone else moves his own cattle in. Unless livestock numbers are somehow tied to specific grazing areas no one has an incentive to control grazing' (p. 1).

concern and attributed it to the problems of communal access to land, using a model akin to Hardin's 'tragedy of the commons'.[16] Briefly stated, the theory proposed that where many actors graze their livestock on communally owned land, it is each individual's interest to keep adding to the number of his or her animals, even if the land is facing overgrazing and degradation.[17] Hardin and others suggested that the way out of this destructive cycle was to have the land owned by the same person(s) who owned the livestock, so that they would have an interest in maintaining the potential of the land. This model has since been rejected by many pastoral specialists,[18] but it appears to be one of the primary justifications for the pastoral reforms in China, and formed part of the new leadership's generally critical attitude towards the concept of communal property.

In fact the implementation of this policy proceeded gradually, and varied from district to district. In some areas it was not until the 1990s that local government allocated each household with clearly individuated rights to fixed areas of pasture, and districts varied as to how exclusive access to pastures actually was. In 1991 many of the *gachaa* subdistricts issued documents known as Grassland Certificates stating how much land was allocated to each of the households of a residential group (termed a *hot*) and the location of it.[19] In some districts, such as both Bayan Gol and Chagaan *sum*s, the spring and winter seasonal pastures of each *gachaa* were allocated to households (individually or in *hot*s), so that each had a winter and spring allocation in one location and a summer and autumn allocation in another. Moving between them could often be difficult and increasingly households began simply to keep their livestock all year round on one set of pastures, drastically reducing their movement. In other *sum*s pasture was divided without separate seasonal allocations, giving each household an area of all-year-round grazing and eliminating long-distance movement altogether. Haymaking pastures were divided early, in the 1980s, and usually located in one or two parts of a *sum* where the land is good—near a river, for example. These had to be divided between households whose other pastures were some distance away and people have to travel to the haymaking areas to make use of their allocation.

The increased economic freedom of the individual household, however, did not mean that the state relinquished its control of the pastoral economy, only

[16] See Hardin (1968).

[17] Hardin's argument was based upon a number of assumptions: notably a particular model of individual behaviour, a reductionist approach to social and economic systems, and the general applicability of the concept of carrying capacity.

[18] See Sandford (1983: 118–27).

[19] This figure was arrived at in different ways in different *gachaa*s, sometimes based on the number of privatized livestock, the number of adults, or the number of household members. In one *gachaa* in Shilingol, for example, each *hot* was allocated 1,300 *mu* (86.7 hectares) per person, including children, plus one *mu* for each of their animals.

the day-to-day management of it. The state maintained quotas for wool and meat, whereby households were obliged to sell a certain amount of these products to the authorities at state prices. These were largely phased out in the early 1990s, as the markets were deregulated, and state procurement agencies, in theory at least, began to pay the market price for livestock products.[20] However, the administration retains the power to regulate prices if it deems it necessary.

A key principle in the state's treatment of pastoralists is its continued control of the land. The introduction of laws governing the use of land underpinned the development of the current responsibility system. In 1985 the Rangeland Law approved by the Sixth People's Congress in Beijing established two levels of governance. Land remained, ultimately, state property; but the pastureland was to be managed by local government who would assign land to both individuals and work units through the issue of a contract (*cheng bao*). The law also stipulated that the permission of banner and *sum* level governments is required before trees or bushes may be cut down or roots dug up. In 1991 the IMAR administration adopted the Management Regulations for IMAR Rangeland, based on the earlier national Rangeland Law. This reaffirmed that all land belonged to the state, that it could be allocated by local government, but could not be sold or transferred from the original contractor to others without legal provision. It included the ban on digging roots and cutting bushes and trees without permission, or (with typical vagueness) the use of resources in other prohibited ways. The regulations include the requirement that when allocating rangeland for individual or collective use the local government must establish a clear boundary and issue a certificate. Such regulations are designed to be implemented with some flexibility, they are subject to the general Chinese principal *yin di zhi yi*, 'adapt to particular local conditions'.

Although many features are new, the principles of the ownership of land in Inner Mongolia resemble those of the pre-revolutionary period in certain respects. Ultimately the land is owned by the state, the supreme political authority, just as it once belonged to the Qing emperor. Land is administered on behalf of the ultimate owner by officials in charge of districts, who allocate land to pastoral families and collect taxes. Pastoral households are, for their part, tied to their district, just as they were in the past, and can expect the area of land they can use to remain the same as long as they fulfil their obligations to the office-holders above them. Only in this broad sense does the current framework resemble the older notions of territorial jurisdiction, and there is no doubt that the form of both rights to land and the obligations owed by pastoralists are very different. In particular the strict division of

[20] The experiment with deregulating the trade in wool in neighbouring provinces of Gansu and Liaoning led to chaotic competition to buy wool (the so-called 'wool wars') in the late 1980s. See Longworth and Williamson (1993: 68).

almost all pastureland between individual households is a new development, changing the nature of pastoralism in the region and reducing the movement of most herding households.

An Overview of Livestock Totals and the Pastoral Economy

The early result of the reforms on the pastoral economy was an apparent increase in the number of animals sold rather than in the overall herd numbers. Figure 5.1 shows how the official figures for the total number of animals in IMAR have varied from 1947 to 1992. After a small rise, the numbers declined slightly in the first half of the 1980s, the low point being the 1984 figure, probably caused by the severe winter of 1983/4. Since then the totals have begun to rise once more and, if the figures are to be believed, rose to record levels in the early 1990s.

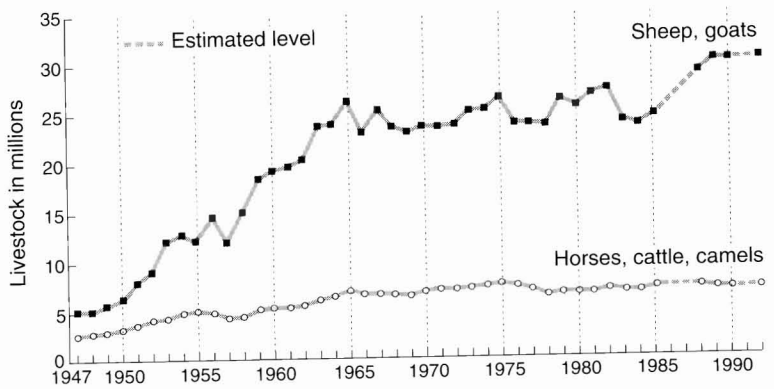


FIG. 5.1 Livestock totals in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, 1947–92

These aggregate totals for the whole of the IMAR do not fully reflect the variability of livestock numbers in a given locality, which may be devastated by local weather conditions. In Shine Barga Left banner, for example, in the ten years from 1975 to 1985 the total number of livestock fell by over 60 per cent, from over 640,000 to 240,000. A good deal of this loss was caused by the terrible winter of 1983/4, in which many of my informants lost half their animals. However, livestock numbers recovered quickly; in Shine Barga Left banner the number of livestock reached 480,000 in 1988, according to expert informants.[21]

[21] The unpublished statistics collected by George Tseo from the Hulun Buir Record Office indicate that in the early 1980s the livestock totals dropped by over 45%, from 2,720,089 in 1980, to

Figure 5.1 suggests that in the IMAR as a whole the total number of animals had remained fairly constant at a little over 30m. from the early 1960s until the late 1980s, creeping a little higher in the early 1990s. Reviewing the recent history of Inner Mongolian pastoralism it is clear that most of the dramatic growth in livestock totals was due to the rise in the numbers of sheep and goats. In 1947, before the socialist transformation, pastoralists kept about twice as many small animals (sheep and goats) as they did large animals (cattle, horses, and camels). By 1990 there were more than four times more small animals being kept than large livestock.

Using 1947 as the baseline when assessing the communist era is misleading, however, because the pastoral economy was at an unusually low point as a result of the disruption caused by recent war. These statistics can be better interpreted by comparison with earlier pre-revolutionary livestock totals. Unfortunately, detailed information is hard to find, but an economic survey of Inner Mongolia by Y. T. Chang, published in 1933, sheds some light on the situation, and indicates changes in the nature of herds as well as their sizes. Mongolian herd compositions have varied over space and time. The figures Chang gives for herd compositions in Shilingol league in 1924 seem very similar to the balance in Hulun Buir in 1947, before socialist transformation. In both cases the number of sheep and goats was approximately equal to the number of horses and cattle.[22] However, his figures for Chahar league are closer to the current balance in that about twice as many sheep and goats were kept than large animals.[23] According to Chang, in Inner Mongolia as a whole in 1928 there were more than 10m. large animals, but only about 7m. sheep and goats.[24] It seems that although herd compositions differed from region to region, the area as a whole experienced a dramatic increase in the proportion of sheep and goats under the communist administration, and this may reflect the official emphasis upon ever-increasing livestock totals.

If we compare the total of 17m. animals in Inner Mongolia in 1928 with the official figure of less than 8m. in 1947 the rapid increase in herd sizes in the 1950s and 1960s become less startling. The livestock totals in the 1940s had been dramatically reduced by the war with Japan, and the Soviet and MPR troops that occupied the region took large numbers of animals with them when they left. The number of animals in the region in 1947 was less than half the 1928 figure given by Chang, and the rapid rises of the following decades can be seen to be a recovery rather than an unprecedented

1,473,813 in 1984. By 1986, however, the totals had begun to recover, increasing by almost 20% to 1,746,716.

[22] Chang (1933: 136).

[23] It should not be thought, however, that modern Inner Mongolian herd compositions are entirely without historical precedent. The balance of animals kept in Outer Mongolia in 1918 was very similar to the present-day Inner Mongolian one—26% of the animals kept in the four *aimags* were big animals (horses, cattle, or camels). See Karamisheff's figures (1925: 361–97).

[24] The boundaries of Inner Mongolia at that time were approximately the same as present day IMAR—see Chang (1933: 67).

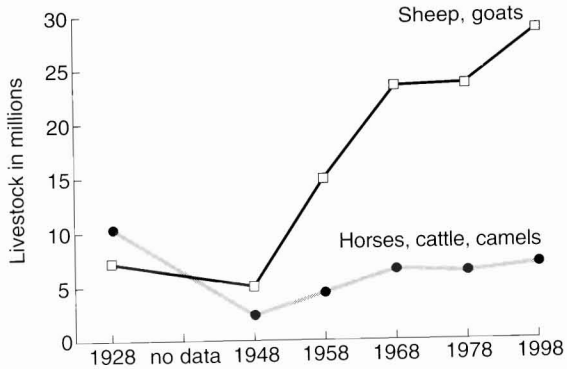


FIG. 5.2 Livestock totals in Inner Mongolia, 1928–88

increase. As can be seen from Fig. 5.2, most of the increase was in the numbers of sheep and goats—the 1928 total of large animals of over 10m. has not been reached since (the 1992 total was only around 7m.). The total number of animals has reached around 30m. in the early 1960s, surpassing the pre-war figures, mainly because of the change in herd composition. More small animals were kept than before collectivization, but fewer large ones. One way of comparing totals of different species is by converting the livestock numbers into standard stocking units (SSUs). Using the standard sheep unit most commonly used by Inner Mongolian specialists[25] I have drawn Fig. 5.3.

Although sheep and goats produce wool and so give an extra income in addition to that from livestock sales, the value of large animals is something between three and ten times that of small ones.[26] Therefore, it could also be argued that in terms of capital wealth the livestock totals for 1928 and 1992 are worth almost the same—about 6bn. yuan at late 1980s prices.[27]

The current Inner Mongolian administration considers the pastureland of the region to be saturated, and maintains that this overstocking is the cause of widespread grassland degradation.[28] Recent work by Inner Mongolian

[25] Cattle are rated as 5 sheep units, horses as 6, and camels as 7. Goats are rated as 0.8. However, because the statistics give only total large animal and small animal figures I have taken each large animal to be worth 6 SSUs, and each small animal to be worth 1. This is a conservative estimate, as it does not lower the small animal value to take account of goats, and some systems rate large animals as worth more than this number of sheep units.

[26] In 1988 a sheep or goat was sold for between 70 and 150 yuan, whilst cattle were sold for between 500 and 1,000 yuan, and average-quality horses between 300 and 600 yuan.

[27] This is using a value of 100 yuan per small animal and 500 yuan per large animals—which gives an approximate value of 5.9bn. yuan for the 1928 livestock total and 6bn. for the 1986 figure.

[28] See Yong Shipeng & Cui Haiting (1985: 94). They argue that of the total area of grassland (791,529 sq. km.) only 75.58% is utilizable for grazing. They calculate the yearly forage yield as 91,286,657 tons. If stalks are also taken into account the total yearly forage is estimated as 107,666,000 tons. Based on this total yield they calculate a 'carrying capacity' in stock of 70,663,000 units in sheep equivalent SSUs. The 1986 total figure was 69,373,600 SSUs.

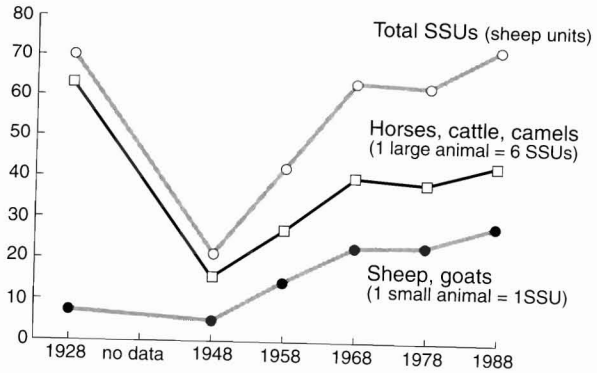


FIG. 5.3 Livestock totals in Inner Mongolia, 1928–88, in standard stocking units

specialists suggests that as much as 35.6 per cent of Inner Mongolian grassland has been degraded and attributes this to overgrazing.[29] As a result, the state has introduced recommended stocking limits for each district, and authorized local government to keep the total numbers of livestock below this level. It is interesting to note, then, that in terms of standard stocking units there has not been a dramatic increase over pre-revolutionary stocking levels at all. The older pastoral economy of Inner Mongolia supported a greater number of large animals relative to sheep and goats, but the pastoral sector—in crude terms—supported something like the same numbers of animals (measured in SSUs) in pre-revolutionary times as they do today.

This raises a number of important questions with regard to the perceived problem of overgrazing. The degradation of Inner Mongolian grasslands cannot be assumed to be simply because it now supports an unprecedentedly high number of animals. Viewed over the long term it appears that the problems reflect the changes in the way in which pastoralism has been *managed*. The expansion of cultivation in the last fifty years has removed some of the most fertile land from pastoral use, thus increasing the grazing pressure on more marginal steppe pastures. Large amounts of grassland were also damaged by the failed attempts to cultivate it during the GLF and Cultural Revolution periods.[30] It may be that under certain conditions greater numbers of sheep and goats generate different and more generally damaging effects on the grassland environment than an equivalent number (measured in SSUs) of large animals (horses, cattle, and camels). Lastly, the decrease in the traditional mobility of pastoralists could well be partly responsible for pasture degradation; indeed several herdsmen I knew considered this to be a key factor. In short, one can but wonder how appropriate it is for the state

[29] Loucks and Jianguo (1992: 71). [30] Longworth and Williamson (1993: 305).

to divide the grassland and attempt to monitor and control the situation in terms of total numbers of animals.

The Administration of a Pastoral District: Bayan Gol sum

In general the pastoral banners of Inner Mongolia each have a town as their administrative centre, and usually have a total population of something between about 20,000 and 100,000 people. The banner is subdivided into several *sum*s and these districts usually contain several thousand inhabitants. In the centre of each is a settlement with the school, post-office, clinic, and government buildings, and around this centre there are usually 1,000–2,000 sq. kms. of pastureland, divided into several subdistricts (*gachaa*) to which herding families are allocated. In these subdistricts some pastoralists still move their herds to and from seasonal pastures, although since the 1980s there has been an increasing tendency for households to spend all year in one location where good pastures have been allocated to them, such as the spring and winter pastures. Many families have built one-storey brick houses in these locations, although they may move the livestock on to more distant seasonal pastures, if they have access to them, at some times of the year.

The *sum* of Bayan Gol in Shine Barga Left banner encompasses an area of around 300,000 hectares of generally rich grazing land, divided into six *gachaa*. In 1988 it was populated by some 3,500 Mongolians, most of whom were pastoralists; and about 700 Han Chinese, all of whom lived at the *sum* centre. At that time about half the Mongolian families in the area had brick houses (*baishin*) at the centre (most of these families also had *ger*, which some of the family stayed in as they moved with their herds.) The rest of the population lived throughout the year in felt *ger*, and unlike Chagaan *sum* in Shilingol and many other pastoral regions, there were few built houses in the pastures around the *sum* centre.

If one wishes to identify some unit that approximates to the pastoral community, the *sum* meets many of the criteria. Most people of a *sum* know all the other residents, whilst the same cannot be said of the larger district of the banner. The majority of herdsmen will not leave the territory of the *sum* unless there is some special reason, and, I was told, most marriages occur within this unit. The district centre serves as a focal point for the community, as everyone uses the shop regularly and most send their children to the primary school. The various *sum* officials form something of a local élite, enjoying the relatively good working conditions afforded by office buildings, and a secure income.

The head of the *sum*—the *sumyn darga*—has overall control of the district administration, namely the People's Affairs office, animal husbandry section, education and teaching section, health protection office, Women's Association, Communist Party and Youth League committees, and the financial

Pl. 1. On the way from the *sum* centre to visit an *ail*. Shine Barga Left banner, 1988

section. There is also the post office which handles mail and telegrams, and usually also has a telephone operator for people to make calls outside the *sum*. Except for the head of the Women's Association, who is always a woman, most of these section heads are men. Female officials seem to be most often found in the fields of health and education, reflecting a continuing association between the female gender and nurturing and caring roles. In Inner Mongolia as a whole about a third of cadres are women (both among Mongolians and Han Chinese), according to official statistics. However, in rural districts there seem to be fewer, between about 10 and 20 per cent.[31]

There are two more organs of local government that fall physically within the jurisdiction of the *sum* administration, but are in fact virtually independent of it. The first of these is the police—the Public Security Bureau (known by the Chinese name *Gong An Ju*) who act as representatives of the PSB in the banner centre, and therefore report directly to them 'over the heads' of the *sum* officials. The PSB also registers persons, issues residence permits, and carries out arrests. It can fine people for minor offences, and refer more serious cases to the higher judicial authorities in the banner. The *sum* branch of the Bank of China is also relatively independent of the *sum* local government, again, because it is subject to the main bank in the banner centre. The bank is also an influential institution, as it provides loans to local families for agricultural production. In the early 1990s the environmental protection legislation in the new Rangeland Law also led to representatives of the Bureau of Rangeland Affairs (*Tal Nutagiin Hamaaruultyn Tobchoo*)[32] being posted in *sum*s to monitor the use of natural resources. At the banner level the Bureau has its own uniformed officers, and can bring charges and issue fines which will be enforced by local police.

[31] See Zhang (1996: 93–5) on the numbers of female cadres in IMAR. She estimates 10–20% of officials are women in pastoral districts, and this corresponds with what I observed.

The local health clinic, although formally under the control of the *sum* health protection office, is an important institution in its own right; as is the local school. There are usually two or three deputy heads of the *sum* (*ded sumyn darag*) who oversee two or three departments of the district administration. In Bayan Gol one of these officials, Batmönh, was in charge of both health and education (school and clinic), and I was told that this was usual for these two departments to be under the same deputy head, as were the financial and animal husbandry departments. Also under the control of the *sum* administration were the six *gachaa*, each with an official head who received a salary and kept the records of the sub district and its inhabitants, recorded the number of each household's livestock, and collected taxes.

The main economic burden placed by the state on pastoral households is the payment of tax to the *sum* administration, via the *gachaa*. Tax rates and arrangements vary, but the main element is a levy on livestock, calculated on the basis of a flat rate for each type of animal. In Hulun Buir in 1993 it was 1.8 yuan per mature goat, 1.5 yuan per sheep, 5 yuan for each adult cow, horse, or camel. In Shilingol, however, herding households not only had to pay a similar level of livestock tax but also a pasture fee, which often amounted to about half as much as the total livestock tax. I was told that in some regions a sales tax of around 10 per cent has also been introduced.

Local government was still expected to ensure that the economic targets set by the administration were fulfilled by pastoralists. In the late 1980s state plans were set for banner, *sum*, and *gachaa*, detailing the number of animals and amount of wool to be sold to the state, the quantity of hay to be produced, number of winter animal sheds to be built, amount of veterinary treatment to be provided, and so on. At first pastoral households were still required to sell to the authorities in line with the plan, and could face a fine if they failed to fulfil their quota. In Bayan Gol attempts to monitor and enforce the quota of sales of each individual family were soon dropped, however, as the state procurement agency was the only large-scale buyer allowed to operate in the region. Most livestock products still ended up being sold to the state at prices that were fixed by the authorities, so the district's plan was more or less fulfilled anyway. In Shilingol, however, sales plans for each

[32] *Tal-a Nutug-un Xamijaragult-jin Tobcij-a*, classical transliteration.

household were enforced with fines until the early 1990s, when they began to be dropped in practice. The main element that affected pastoral households was the requirement to sell livestock, wool, and cashmere to the state procurement agency. The households I knew were expected to sell about 10 per cent of their total livestock to the state each year, about half their wool and almost all their cashmere. In 1993 I was told that cadres had begun to stop threatening households with fines for failing to meet these plans.

Some elements of the *sum* administration still own some livestock, and these are generally leased out to herding households under the terms of a contract very much like the old *süreg* arrangement—typically a specified amount of animal produce must be supplied by the herding household, who can then keep the surplus for themselves. The Women's Association in Bayan Gol had a few dozen sheep and goats under this system, as did the school, but the numbers involved were small, and on the whole kept for when meat was needed for banquets and social events.

Despite the dissolution of the People's Communes, local government continues to dominate pastoral life. Each pastoral household is registered in one of the *gachaas* of the *sum*, and may not move elsewhere without obtaining a residence permit (*am' öreh*—in Mongolian, or *hu kou* in Chinese) for the new location. This requires the approval of the officials of the appropriate districts and subdistricts, and ties most people to the place where they were born. Indeed, now that pastureland has been allocated to individual households or *hot*s in the *gachaa*, there is not usually anywhere that newcomers could be allowed to graze animals if they did move. There are a number of ways in which most pastoral families cannot help but depend upon the officials in the local administration. First, there is the web of laws and regulations that are enforced and interpreted by local officials, and which many families could be charged with infringing in some way or other. Either they have had too many children, or they have paid less tax than they should, or have more livestock than permitted, or have broken some other environmental regulation. If any of their children have educational or professional aspirations, the approval of local officials may be needed for their advancement; if they seek a bank loan local Party or government officials will probably have to approve it. Unless one has support from higher up the government hierarchy (such as at the banner level, for example), then success in any of these matters will be dependent on staying on reasonably good terms with the appropriate officials and, above all, with the Party.

Although technically separate from local government, the Chinese Communist Party retains control of the administrative apparatus, and with it the media, educational system, and every legal walk of life. Most important officials are members of the Party, particularly at the senior levels. Party committees vet new officials, oversee the conduct of their members, assess local personnel, make reports to their Party superiors, and approve all manner of

administrative decisions. At the *sum* level the Party secretary is widely considered to be at least as powerful as the head of the *sum*, who is unlikely to last long if the local Party begins to disapprove of him. The Party has a formal presence even at the level of the *gachaa*, which has a Party *darga*, as well as the administrative head. In the *sum* as a whole there are generally between fifty and a few hundred Party members, and the image they are expected to cultivate is that of respectable and politically active supporters of the regime. To gain entry individuals must be nominated by someone already within the Party, and should have an unblemished record—preferably an exemplary one. They will be expected to propagate Party policy and lead by personal example, ideally they should be model workers in their field. The actual ideological zeal of members does not always match official expectation, however, and of the four Party members I knew well only Lubsandorj appeared really politically active. Sodnom and his son were also in the Party, but rarely mentioned politics, and were quite uninterested in ideological debate. The Party official I knew in Shilingol (Nasan-Ochir) was equally pragmatic, approaching his Party work simply as a job.

Theoretically the officials of a *sum* are representatives of the local community, and there is a form of election for the *sumyn darga*, although in reality these are simply formalities that confirm the banner's appointee in his post. In each *gachaa* several politically reliable individuals are chosen by local officials to stand for the post of *ardiin tulguulagch*[33]—People's Trustee or representative. These are usually rather respectable men and women aged anywhere from 18 to about 60, but usually in middle age. Sometimes a meeting is called in the *gachaa* where people gather to vote, but in Bayan Gol an official usually went from *ail* to *ail* carrying the polling box. The list of candidates is limited to those nominated by the administration, so although people can cast their votes for their choice of representative, the result is never in doubt—a set of co-operative People's Trustees, loyal to the authorities, are always elected. The Trustees from each *gachaa* attend a meeting in the *sum* centre and vote to approve the *sumyn darga* and his deputies in their posts, and the *sum* leadership then goes on to appoint various other officials.

It was just conceivable, if the *sumyn darga* is sufficiently unpopular among the local administration and their supporters, that the People's Trustees refuse to elect the banner's nominee. This had never happened in Bayan Gol, however, and in any case, I was told, it would simply mean that the proposed leader would be transferred to another district and gain office there. Pastoralists share a certain cynicism about the nature of the establishment, as Ochir told me, 'Communist Party officials always rise, never fall'—a Mongolian translation of a well-known Chinese doggerel.[34] The *sumyn darga*

[33] This is transliterated *tulgagulgci* from the classical script.

[34] The Chinese saying is *Gung chan dang de guan zhi shang bu xia*.

is generally appointed for a three-year term of office. An official may be given a second or third term in the same *sum*, but the administration generally prefers to move them to another district every few years to prevent them becoming too enmeshed in the local community.

The various networks of kin and friends in the *sum* had some influence with particular officials in the local administration, certainly those who were relatives or friends of long-standing. Because I quickly became a friend of Dorj, for example, I was immediately on friendly terms with his network, including his affines—Sodnom, the second Party secretary, and Damdinsüren, the head of the People's Affairs office. Dashjab, the policeman, and his influential friend Lubsandorj (a Party member) moved in a different social circle, none of whom were invited to the wedding of Dorj's son and Sodnom's daughter. Lubsandorj was eager to speak to me, however, and would find some opportunity to criticize Sodnom and suggest I have less to do with him. Sodnom was well connected, however: his brother was a Party official at the banner centre, and the brother of Sodnom's wife, Altangerel, was married to the younger sister of the head of the *sum*.

Bat-erdene, the *sumyn darag*, was an energetic, middle-aged man, originally from another *sum* in Shine Barga Left banner. As such he was a slightly more distant figure than many of the junior officials, many of whom had lived in the district all their lives. Nevertheless, Bat-erdene was a Barga Mongol from the same banner, and in this sense he was considered to be a local. *Sum* heads are often from a different *aimag* entirely, and may speak with a strong regional dialect quite unlike that of the people they administer. This can lead to a certain mistrust. I was told of two cases of formal complaints against officials, and in both cases it was emphasized that the officials concerned were from other districts and did not understand or respect local people's interests.

The first of these incidents concerned a neighbouring *sum*, where a new head arrived from another *aimag*, determined to find a way to increase the revenue of his administration. In the end he struck a deal with a local Chinese enterprise who paid a fee to use some of the best pasture in the *sum* to make hay, which they took out of the district for sale in other banners. The locals, however, had used the leased area for winter pasture, and organized a formal complaint to the banner authorities. The new head of the *sum* did not have sufficient influence in the banner to keep his job, and was transferred to another region after little more that a year in office. However, in this case local opinion only led to the official's transfer because the protest was endorsed by other officials in the *sum* administration, and it was described to me as an exceptional incident. Provided a *sum* head retains the support of his superiors in the banner administration he is unlikely to have much to fear from local unpopularity. Indeed, many of the officials in the four pastoral banners of Hulun Buir have arranged for large amounts of hay to be cut and

sold, causing a good deal of ill-feeling in the *sum*s concerned. Locals complained that this was a side-effect of circulating officials every few years, as many *sum* officials were primarily interested in making use of a valuable local resource (sometimes to line their own pockets) before being transferred to some other region.

The other case occurred in 1992 and involved the environmental protection regulations introduced the year before as part of the Rangeland Law. In a nearby district an old herdsman cut down seven *öröl* (wild plum) trees.[35] These were small trees, hardly bigger than bushes, and were nearly dead. The herdsman used them to repair the fences for his *hashaa* (animal enclosure), as he had many times in the past. However, the newly arrived representative of the Bureau of Rangeland Affairs heard about the matter and, keen to demonstrate his diligence, had the old man charged. The banner police were called and imposed a fine of 7 sheep—one for each of the little trees. This aroused much indignation among pastoralists in the *sum*. The locals complained that they had always cut these sorts of dying trees and used the wood; this was part of a tradition of land use, they argued, which had preserved the environment for centuries before the Rangeland law was introduced. Neither sheep nor cash was forthcoming. The police threatened to seize them, and for a while there was a stalemate. However, someone in the *sum* must have had influential connections, my informants supposed, because the police received orders to compromise; they reduced the fine to 3 sheep, and the old man paid it. Again, this could only have happened because of the support of a section of the *sum* administration itself; without such backing organized opposition to official authority would have been unthinkable.

This is not to say that there is no admiration for those individuals who defy the authorities. In the late 1980s the richest man in the whole of western Hulun Buir was said to be a herdsman named Seriteri, who lived in Shine Barga Left banner, not far from Bayan Gol. Friends told me, with some relish, the story of Seriteri's confrontation with the local authorities, and the tale may have grown somewhat in the telling. In 1985 there was a forest fire in the banner, and a number of trees had been blackened and damaged. Seriteri made use of the opportunity to cut down more than 50 large pine trees (*nars*) for timber. When this came to the notice of the administration they charged him, and fined him a shocking 30,000 yuan—an immense amount of money for that time, worth 400 sheep or more. Seriteri, who was well connected with the central IMAR government in Hohhot, ignored the fine. The police responded by seizing his large, very expensive (and newly privatized) tractor, declaring that they would hold it as surety until he had entirely paid off his enormous fine in instalments. The very next day Seriteri walked into the police station carrying a large sack, out of which he emptied

[35] The *öröl* tree (written *yril* in classical Mongolian) is the Siberian wild plum, *Prunus betulaefolia*.

the entire 30,000 yuan in cash. He then calmly left and drove away on his tractor. This immediately made Seriteri a famous local figure, much admired for his remarkable wealth and swagger. Again, however, this was only made possible by powerful political connections—Seriteri (although a herdsman) was a representative member of the Inner Mongolian People's Congress, the assembly that rubber-stamped Party policy in Hohhot.

Although there may be the occasional challenge to the authority of an individual official over a specific incident, there is a realistic perception among pastoralists that state policy itself is beyond their control, and is irresistible. The metaphorical construction of the political sphere places senior agencies above communities and central to the polity as a whole. This is not a new conceptualization, introduced by the modern Chinese nation-state, but is an older and indigenous Mongolian notion of political order. As long ago as the thirteenth century those with superior rank were spoken of as 'higher' (*deed*).[36] The term 'central place' (*töb gajar*) also means 'headquarters', and the word for centre (*töb*) also means orthodox and righteous.[37] In the face of complaints about a policy he is describing or implementing, a local official will often say *deerh jaabar*[38]—'directives from above', implying that they are beyond his control and must be obeyed. Such policy 'from above' could be that issued by the banner, the *aimag*, IMAR or Chinese national governments—any higher authority—and it is generally recognized that an official cannot be blamed for the content of such policy, although he or she may be criticized for the way in which such orders are interpreted. To protest effectively, however, the inhabitants of a *sum* would have to be able to offer a 'better' interpretation of the policy. This is one reason for the importance of connections with those higher up in the administration. How can a resident in a remote pastoral district know if the local official's interpretation of government policy could be challenged, without discussing it with someone more senior in the political hierarchy? Banner and *aimag* officials could not possibly examine every disputable decision of their subordinates, so a personal connection is thought of as the best way to approach them.

The importance of such personal networks certainly predated the communist era of Inner Mongolia: Aberle mentions the 'strongly nepotistic nature' of the administration in pre-communist Chahar,[39] Jagchid and Hyer note the traditional importance of relations between friends,[40] and Gillmour's accounts indicate the significance of personal connections in nineteenth-

[36] See s. 228 of the *Secret History*—Cleaves (1982: 166), Onon (1990: 127). The term *deed erh* (means supreme power—literally 'high authority'.

[37] *Töb gajar*, classical transliteration; *töv gazar*, Cyrillic. The term for centre (*töb*) also means orthodox, and *töb surtal* (central teaching) was the term for orthodox religious doctrine.

[38] *Degereki zigaburi*, classical transliteration; *deerh zaavar*, Cyrillic.

[39] Aberle (1962: 17).

[40] Jagchid and Hyer (1979: 136).

century Mongolia.[41] In general, relations with kin (*hamaatan* or *töröl sadan*)[42] still provide the most important strands in these networks. Before the family planning legislation was introduced Mongolians tended to have large families, and the kin network of older people is often large and well extended. Even now Mongolians are allowed more children than Han Chinese and pastoral families frequently have three or more children.[43] The strongest links are usually between close kin (*oir sadan* or *oiryn hamaatan*),[44] particularly those who were once members of the same household, such as one's children, siblings, parents, and grandparents. However, kinship is generally traced bilaterally to a depth of at least three generations. The expectations that relatives have of one another differs somewhat, depending upon their relative ages. In general, elder kin are expected to provide assistance such as advice, influence, and material goods or money; while juniors are expected to provide respect, obedience, and sometimes labour. Connections with affines seem to be no less important than those to cognates. This is particularly true in respect of the son-in-law, because as (Humphrey notes in the Buryat case)[45] there is a tradition of the son-in-law providing labour and assistance for his wife's parents.

After close kin, the strongest bonds of obligation tend to be between good friends, particularly schoolmates and those who have been together in difficult times—such as persecution, exile, or service in the army. The strong obligations that kin are expected to feel for one another are also applied to close friendship, and many Mongolian terms apply to both types of relationship. The term *sadan*, for example, is primarily used to mean kin, but can also mean friend. A cognate can be specified using the term *töröl sadan* (lit. 'a birth *sadan*'), an affine with the term *urag sadan* ('an affine *sadan*') and a close friend with the term *nöhör sadan*[46] ('a companion *sadan*'). As such friends are usually of similar ages they do not generally have the sort of asymmetrical obligations that are associated with relations between kin of different generations. A more widely used term for good friends also draws upon the idiom of kinship—*ah düü*—(lit. 'older brother and younger sibling'). This implies the relative equality of kin of the same generational level who can also be described using the term. In many cases gifts between such friends will be associated with recreation, such as presents of alcohol and tobacco, but they are also entail obligations to provide services or goods that one partner

[41] In Kalgan Gillmour (1893: 168) could not buy camels for any price, but had to wait until a Mongol friend arrived who could use personal links to find some.

[42] *Namijatan* and *töryl sadun*, classical transliteration.

[43] A study of two pastoral districts in 1993 by the MECCIA research project showed that among interviewed households the majority of parental couples had three or more children, and families with four or five children were still not uncommon. See Zhang (1996: 72).

[44] A close relative is described using the same metaphor of physical proximity as employed in the English term—*oir sadan* (*oir-a sadun*, classical transliteration).

[45] Humphrey (1983: 347–50).

[46] *Nökyr sadun*, classical transliteration.

may need from time to time. For example, help with obtaining transport, or official authorization for something are typical favours that are expected of friends able to provide them.

The networks of the two Party members mentioned above, Sodnom and Lubsandorj, connected them with other influential individuals, as well as local pastoralists. Sodnom, for example, was a friend of Dorj, and had been since both had been accused and persecuted during the anti-Nei Ren Dang campaign. His wife, Altangerel, was a teacher at the *sum* primary school, and her elder brother was Bat, the schoolteacher mentioned in Ch. 4, who was sent to prison for four years during the Cultural Revolution for alleged membership of the Nei Ren Dang. Bat had been reinstated as the head of the middle school in the late 1970s, however, and was married to the younger sister of Bat-erdene, the head of the *sum*. Altangerel's younger brother Byamsüren, also lived in Bayan Gol *sum*, herding livestock in the second *gachaa*, and looking after Sodnom and Altangerel's own herd of 30 cattle and 60 sheep and goats for them. Sodnom's own brother was a party official in the banner administration. Sodnom and Altangerel's eldest son, Enhsaihan, was also a Party member, although he was only 23 years old at the time. However, he had good political credentials having just completed three years in the army. When I was in Bayan Gol in 1988 he was still living at the parental home doing Party work for his father while waiting for a job as a cadre in the administration (a posting that eventually took him to another banner in Hulun Buir *aimag*). He had been waiting for about a year when I first met him, and from time to time he would travel to the banner centre to discuss the matter with his uncle in the Party administration there.

Sodnom's arch-enemy Lubsandorj was a leftist Party member and a mechanic by training. He worked for the *sum* administration, maintaining an aged diesel generator that intermittently supplied electricity to about half the buildings in the *sum* for several hours every evening. Lubsandorj was the eldest of five brothers and had one younger sister. One of his brothers was a doctor, another a driver and the third—Ganbat—was an official in the banner administration. These connections provided numerous benefits—medicines, transportation opportunities, and support in the involved world of officialdom. As a result Lubsandorj had done very well from the privatization, the family owned two tractors, grass-cutting machinery, welding equipment, a herd of livestock, and a large mud-brick house with a vegetable patch. The youngest brother Ganjargal lived with Lubsandorj and described himself as a *malchin* (herdsman), looking after the family's herds. In fact the 250 sheep and goats, 25 cows, and 15 horses that they owned were kept for them by a friendly family who lived in a *ger* in the third *gachaa*, but Ganjargal went out to see them twice a month, and helped with ancillary work such as cutting and transporting hay. Lubsandorj had held a post in the *sum* administration in the 1970s, but lost it in the early 1980s when the rehabilitation of many of those officials condemned in the Cultural Revolution led to the demotion of some Maoist cadres. He remained an influential figure in the local Party, however. His wife Altanchimeg worked for the Women's Association and was the daughter of a local scholar who had helped establish the *sum*'s health clinic in the 1950s. The couple had two sons, aged 17 and 14, and the house was also shared with Lubsandorj's younger sister who was 18 and still attending school.

Sodnom and Lubsandorj's latest dispute was over hayfields, and it had rekindled their bitter enmities of the 1960s. Lubsandorj had three strips of hayfield each being around 2 sq. kms. in size. Sodnom, who had only one such strip himself, had suggested that he take over one of Lubsandorj's strips. Lubsandorj had received a larger original allocation than he should, Sodnom argued, and the third strip of land was surplus to his requirements. It was well known in the *sum* that after cutting about 50 tons of hay for his own animals, Lubsandorj had sold 20 tons or so for cash. The dispute smouldered on throughout the summer of 1988, and eventually I heard that Lubsandorj had retained his hayfields and Sodnom had expanded his allocation at the expense of a different family.

Birth Control Policies

One of the most controversial policies in the *sum* was the official limit on the number of children permitted to a couple. The Chinese state had begun attempts to regulate the reproduction of its subjects in the commune period, promoting small families, raising the legal age of marriage,[47] and encouraging the use of contraceptives. Much of this work was done by the Women's Association staff. These early birth control policies had, at first, only a moderate effect on the Mongolian rural regions of China, but in the 1980s and 1990s the regulations became increasingly strict and were more rigorously enforced. Mongolians enjoyed some benefits, however. Ulanhu and other officials representing minority nationalities argued that their relatively small numbers made them vulnerable to population decline and cultural absorption if their birth rate was kept as low as the already populous Han. The post-Maoist leadership were sufficiently sensitive to these fears to allow minority nationalities to have more children. Most nationalities are entitled to have one more child than the Han Chinese, and the very tiniest groups—such as the Orochon, Evenke, and Daur—are free of formal limits altogether.[48]

[47] The minimum age of marriage was set at 20 for Han women and 22 for Han men; for Mongolians and other minority nationalities it was set lower, however, 18 for women and 20 for men. There are still inducements for women to marry late, most notably an extra 115 days maternity leave. Those who delay pregnancy until several years after marriage get an additional 30 days maternity leave.

[48] These minorities, all numbering less than 100,000, mostly live in Hulun Buir. The few thousand remaining Evenke and Orochen speak a Tungus language, related to Manchu, while the more

State regulations stipulate that Han Chinese couples are allowed only one child, under normal circumstances. However, if both parents are rural residents and the first child is a girl, they may (with the permission of the local authorities) have a second child, four years or more after the birth of the first. They may also apply for permission to have a second child if their only child is severely disabled or, under certain circumstances, adopted.[49] Some people are not permitted to have children at all. The current version of the family planning regulations, issued in 1990, includes a chillingly discriminatory clause, reminiscent of eugenics programmes. Mentally handicapped people, it states, must be sterilized before marriage.

In the case of marriages between partners of different nationality, then the couple may choose to which nationality the family belongs. This has led some families, particularly in the Han-dominated cities, to be registered as Mongolian while being culturally and linguistically almost identical to Han Chinese.[50] However, in rural areas Mongolians and Han tend to marry within their own communities, and intermarriage is uncommon.[51]

Mongolians, and most other minority nationals, may have two children, and rural residents may (with permission) have a third child if the first two are girls, or under certain other special circumstances.[52] Remarried couples can apply for permission to have an additional child only if one of the partners has no children from previous marriages. Second and third children should be born no less than three years after the previous birth. Couples who break the regulations are liable for a fine, the amount of which varies; but in 1990 a Mongolian couple I knew were fined 300 yuan for having their second child two years and three months after their first. For those who have more children than they are permitted the fines are higher, and there are other sanctions. The regulations state that if one parent is a state employee or cadre he or she cannot progress in rank or salary for 5 years, and will not be paid for maternity leave. If one or both parents are unemployed they will not be allowed to gain state employment. Pastoralists and farmers will not be awarded special certificates or honours for five years. Although the regulations do not stipulate the size of the fine for having unauthorized children, they do state that the fine for a second unauthorized child should be twice the amount of the first.

populous Daur speak a Mongolian dialect. Although encouraged to practise family planning they have no formal restrictions on family size.

[49] A Han couple may have a second child under the following circumstances: If the first child is disabled or handicapped (with an inherited disability) and unable to work; if a couple have been married for 8 years or more, have had no children of their own in that time but have adopted one, they may then have one child of their own; if one of the married partners has worked for more than five years as a miner in a state mine, and will continue to work; if the husband and wife are both without any permanent residence permit for a city and one of them is seriously disabled. In any case to have the second child a couple must have permission from the Family Planning Committee of the league (*aimag*) or municipal government. This version of the regulations was issued in 1990.

[50] See Naran Bilik (1996: 136).

[51] Even in the mixed Han–Mongolian agricultural community near Chifeng studied by Rong Ma, which was unusual in its high level of integration between Mongolian and Han, less than 10% of the households had mixed Han–Mongol marriages (4 out of 79). See Ma (1993: 185).

[52] The same mitigating circumstances as listed above for Han couples.

As with most policies, however, local officials were given considerable discretion to make allowances for the particular circumstances of families concerned, and in the 1980s most pastoral families seem to have had at least three children. Sometimes this could be done by gaining formal approval, and sometimes the family would simply pay whatever fine was imposed. The zealousness with which cadres enforced these policies and their attitudes towards them varied considerably. The ever-zealous Lubsandorj, for example, had only two children, both sons, and was eager to point out that, by contrast, Sodnom had no less than six—five daughters and a son. Sodnom explained, however, that all his children had been born before the current regulations had been introduced. Damdinsüren, another affine of Dorj and the head of the People's Affairs office, had five children, the youngest of whom had been born in 1981, in apparent contradiction of central policy. This was justified in the following way: the eldest daughter was actually Dorj's, and had been adopted by Damdinsüren and his wife Altanchichig shortly after birth. A local doctor had given their only son a disability certificate (although he appeared strappingly healthy to the untrained eye), and the couple then had only two daughters of their own to account for, and were therefore entitled to another child.

Pastoral couples without official jobs to lose often did not try to get authorization for more children at all. A typical example was that of Dorj's niece, Narangerel. She and her husband Baatar had five children—two of them in breach of the current regulations. They had decided simply to break the official limits and pay the fines that were levied on them (which were only a few hundred yuan at that time). Since the early 1990s the regulations have been tightened and enforced more strictly, and families do seem to be getting smaller than in the past.[53] Like other aspects of national policy the birth control objectives are incorporated into the state plan, so that the *sum*, and even the *gachaa*, has an annual plan for the number of children allowed to be born under the family planning regulations. This motivates officials to put pressure on pastoralists to observe the limits, and they have become increasingly tough on those who become pregnant with an unauthorized child. But it is still in the *sum* centres and towns that the regulations are most strictly observed, as many of these residents have some sort of state employment and are generally under even greater pressure to comply. However, it was common knowledge that officials sometimes bent the rules, despite the pressure from the centre. In Shilingol, I was told, the son of a retired *gachaa* head had his son officially adopted by a relative so that his wife could have another

[53] Inner Mongolian friends all agree on this. See also Zhang (1996: 95).

child. In fact the boy never left his parent's house. Another approach is to gain a certificate from a doctor to show that a parent or child has an inherited disability so as to qualify for extra children, as Damdinsüren did.

It is genuinely difficult, however, for officials to regulate the number of children born to the small, but reputedly growing, number of people who move from place to place. In cities there are itinerant workers, often from more southerly Chinese provinces, who are said to avoid all regulation. In those pastoral regions where the regulations are strictly enforced, some couples will move to another district for the birth of an unauthorized child, to avoid the risk of being forced to have an abortion.[54] The restrictions are generally unpopular, especially among pastoralists. These 'reproduction refugees' are sometimes sardonically referred to as *partizan angi* (the partisan column), which indicates sympathy for their plight, as well as a certain ironic humour in comparing them with a guerrilla army. These families often move back to their district after a couple of years, with their children, and generally face a fine but usually nothing worse. Older pastoralists such as Purebmaa and Damdin were particularly unenthusiastic about the birth control policies. Their views reflected traditional attitudes towards children which represented them as a blessing on the family rather than a burden.

A high value was placed on both male and female children, and I found no Mongolian prepared to admit to a preference for male offspring, always saying they would be just as happy to have daughters as sons. But the traditions of patrilineal descent have left their mark in the oral culture, particularly in regions that have exogamous clans, such as Hulun Buir and the eastern semi-agricultural *aimag*s. When a couple have a son one could use the phrase *ündes jalgah*[55]—to 'connect the root' or 'continue the origin'—meaning that the boy will perpetuate the lineage. If a couple have no sons one could (although it would be tactless comment) describe their patriline ending—*ür tasarah*[56] (to break the seed,. However, it is unusual to talk about having children in this formal way and if they expressed a preference for the sex of their next child at all, the couples I knew spoke of this in terms of personal preference rather than principles of descent. The usual ideal was to have both girls and boys.

One consequence of having smaller herding families is fewer children to help with the work of the encampment. By the time they are 9 or 10 Mongolian children are usually able to play an active part in the everyday tasks, and generally help their parents throughout the long summer holidays and whenever they are not at school. By the time they are in their late teens children are often of crucial importance to the family as workers. Unsurprisingly, birth control is unpopular among rural households who often

[54] Theoretically those with temporary residence permits should register with the local family planning authority. They should gain permission to reside and an employment contract. They are then governed by the local family planning regulations of the district.

[55] *Yndysy zalgax*, classical transcription.

[56] *Yr-e tasuraxu*, classical transcription.

face shortages of labour, and some parents have begun to take their children out of school to help with the work at home.[57] The ideal of having both male and female children has a practical as well as an affective value. It would be extremely difficult for a single individual to aquire all the many skills and capabilities needed to run a pastoral household, which are, to a large extent, conceived of as composed of two gender-specific fields of competence. Having both male and female children provides both parents with appropriately gendered assistants to learn and help with their work. Although virilocal residence is something of a tradition, it is quite common for a son-in-law to live with his wife's parents and help herd their animals if they have no sons of their own. Even if all a couple's children are of one sex, then, as long as there are several of them it is reasonably likely that marriage will bring a young adult of the opposite gender into the herding family to assist either with the female or male skill-set.

To monitor and oversee the enforcement of the birth control policy, each *sum* administration is required to employ a family planning officer; often (as was the case in Bayan Gol *sum)* this post was held by the head of the Women's Association. At the level of the *sum* the director of the Women's Association (*Emegteichüüdiin Holboony Erhlegch*) should be a university or college graduate. She sits on the *sum* local government committee, and is a salaried state employee.[58] Beneath her are the Women's Association officials in each of the *gachaas*. These, like other *gachaa* officials, are generally pastoralists (not full-time state employees), who are paid an additional fee for their part-time government work. The Women's Association and Youth League *gachaa* leaders have the lowest stipend (just 100 yuan a year in 1992), and both posts are sometimes held by the same woman. Much of the Association's work at present is concerned with family planning policy; in principle its officials are also involved with family disputes and domestic violence—acting as a mediator in many cases—and present state policies towards women's rights. Two or three times a year a women's meeting is held in the *sum* centre, and each *gachaa* has one or two representatives who attend such meetings. When I asked what went on at the meetings I was told by one woman, 'oh, just a lot of talk'. A male friend joked about it: 'They tell the women they should quarrel with their husbands—then when there is a family dispute [as a result] the women's committee will have found themselves a nice job to do [as mediators]!'

Every four years there are elections for the positions of director and one or two vice-directors. The representatives usually simply re-elect the candidate appointed by the *sum* local government. Indeed, this election is seen as really just a formality, with the outcome a forgone conclusion. If the position

[57] Teachers in pastoral districts often mentioned this tendency. For levels of non-attendance and further discussion see Ward (1996: 32–5), and Zhang (1996: 79–80).

[58] In 1992 the salary of the 30-year-old *Emegteichüüdiin Holbooii Erhlegch* was 320 yuan a month.

is disputed the other candidate is not usually a serious one. Even if a candidate were to lose she would have to be given another job in the administration because she has to remain a cadre of some sort. An unpopular official might be moved to another district before the election, so as to prevent an embarrassing electoral result.

One of the most visible public results of the state promotion of women's interests is the *Delhiin Emegtaichüüdiin Bayar* (International Women's Day) on 8 March. On this day female state employees have a half-day holiday. In Bayan Gol *sum* there was a Women's Day fund, managed by a committee composed of several women and chaired by the head of the *gachaa* Women's Association. The *gachaa* near to the *sum* centre usually came together in the centre to organize the festivities, but more distant *gachaa* would organize their own celebrations. (This was done in collaboration with the cultural chamber, a section of the district administration for the promotion of cultural activities such as providing access to books, TV, music equipment, etc.). The fund consisted of one or two dozen sheep which were given by local families and looked after by a herding household. Each year the committee would have some sheep sold and slaughtered to provide food and drink for the celebration. At the *sum* centre forty or fifty young people would gather to socialize and dance from midday until late that night. Almost all the young women tended to go, as did many of the young men. Older female teachers often made a point of attending, and most of the female cadres (who have the afternoon off) also showed up. The organizers made some speeches, reinforcing family planning policies and other official messages. Middle-aged and older herding women tended not to go, however; they were not generally so interested in the dancing and were usually busy with their families at home.

Attitudes towards the Chinese

Historically Mongolian attitudes towards the Han (*hitad*)[59] have been marked by a certain antagonism. The Han were associated with traders and merchants who had a reputation of cheating and sharp practice. Other negative views of Chinese are as poor peasant farmers who came to Inner Mongolia to make a living because of overcrowding in their own provinces. In many cases, however, relations between Mongolians and Chinese are generally friendly. But relentless Chinese settlement of Mongolian lands and the savage political movements of the recent past have contributed to Mongolian antipathy. In Alasha, for example, I was told that local Mongolians were not, at first, particularly antagonistic towards Chinese settlers, and the harsh desert environment encouraged co-operation between them. However, after the Cultural

[59] This is actually transliterated *hyatad* from Cyrillic Mongolian, and *kitad* from the classical script, but I have written the term *hitad* because this is closer to Inner Mongolian pronunciation.

Revolution attitudes towards the Chinese hardened, and a popular story expressed the sense of betrayal that many felt. During a famine in the 1950s a kind Mongolian family was said to have found a very young Chinese boy whose parents had died or abandoned him. They took the boy in and brought him up as one of the family. But, the story goes, the boy grew to become a youth at the time of the Cultural Revolution. He turned on the Mongolian family that had raised him and denounced them.

In Hulun Buir there is a saying, *Hana bagtamaar orju ireed, hoimor bagtagüi suuna*[60]—'Coming they could fit in through the *hana* [the *ger* wall], staying they don't fit on the *hoimor* [place of honour].' The walls of the *ger* are made from felt coverings over a latticework frame of wood (*hana*) that can be compressed like a concertina for compact transportation. Anything that could fit in through the gaps in the *hana* must be small—only a few inches wide. The *hoimor* is the high-status northern part of the *ger*, usually covered with carpet or rug, where the host and important guests are seated. Something that could not be accommodated by the *hoimor* would either be grotesquely huge, or so self-important as to find the seat of honour inadequate.

This saying was used in the past to describe the Harchin and other newcomers who might at first seem very humble, but who later become pompous officials. Often those who had come into the region from the south-eastern parts of Inner Mongolia were poor and rather desperate at first, without friends or relatives to help them make a living. Sometimes these characters, who had been at first fawningly polite, later became important figures in the local administration, and seemed to become overbearing and ungrateful to the locals who had helped them when they arrived. They would often bring in relatives from Jirem or Hinggan to fill official posts, rather than appoint locals. More recently, however, some felt that the couplet was better used to describe the Chinese colonization of Inner Mongolia.

Many young Mongolians, even in rural areas, feel that to get on and up in the world they need to speak Chinese, the language of the cities and much of the administration. Although the administrative culture still tolerates Mongolian (which has official parity with Chinese), the commercial sphere is dominated by the Chinese language. This is not only because of traditions of Chinese commerce, most cities simply do not have many Mongolian residents, only in Shilinhot does the Mongolian population make up a sizeable proportion of the city population (33,500 out of 126,900 in 1990). Although there are still some special positions in the administration that require Mongolian (in literature, media, education, culture, and the arts), the larger part of the administrative apparatus still operates in Chinese, and to gain the really important and powerful jobs an official has to know how to read, write, and speak it.

[60] *Xan-a bagtamar oruju ireged, Xoimur bagtaxu-ygei saguna*, classical transliteration.

However, for most rural Mongolians such matters are largely irrelevent to their everday lives. The education system still requires (theoretically) ten years of compulsory education; however, a large proportion of children leave school at 13 or 14, after five years of primary school education in the local *sum*. This has become more common since the closure of many of the middle schools in the *sum* centres around the early 1980s, schools which used to educate local students until they were 18 or 19 years old. The middle schools were moved to the banner centres, making attendance more difficult and expensive, and many families decide not to send their children. Going to the banner town exposes the students to Chinese language, culture, media, cinema, fashion, and food, in a way which was unlikely in most Mongolian *sum*s. This has increased the tendency for many young Mongolians (particularly the upwardly mobile) to acquire an orientation towards urban centres and Chinese culture.

Pastoral Living Standards

Despite the fact that there were lower numbers of animals in the late 1980s than in the 1970s in Shine Barga Left banner, most herdsmen I knew could not remember ever being so well off, and this demonstrates that herd totals alone are a poor guide to pastoral living standards. The local Party officials explained that the reforms were designed to produce a higher rate of animal commercialization and consumption. The old method of blindly pursuing the highest number of animals possible has been replaced, they argued, by a concern for the living standards of Mongolian households. In this respect the reforms have been a success, as informants' reports confirm the government statistics which show that incomes have risen dramatically.

Quantifying the effects of reform is difficult. Hao Fan gives the findings of a survey carried out in Shilingol in 1983. Whilst the total number of livestock increased by a modest 2.2 per cent, the proportion of livestock that were sold or consumed in the league reached 24.3 per cent, which was 4.1 per cent higher than the previous year, and considerably higher than the level considered normal for the past thirty years, which was around 15 per cent. The proportion of the herds that were sold was 16.2 per cent—about twice what was usual in the People's Communes.[61] This means that the 59,000 pastoral Mongolian households in the region must have sold an average of about 22 animals each that year, which is the sort of amount that informants considered normal. These figures should be treated with some caution, however. It is not clear if this rate was really sustainable and represented a permanent increase in the reproduction and survival rate of the animals, or just indicated a year with unusually high sales. Households were taxed upon the number of

[61] Hao Fan (1987: 320).

animals they owned, and so there was a financial incentive to sell more livestock. However, despite these measures, all the pastoral families I knew wanted to build up their herds, and sold about as many animals as they had been required to in the past.

Government statistics painted a picture of an unparalleled growth in living standards, with the income of herding families growing faster than their farming counterparts. In IMAR as a whole the per capita income for pastoralists in 1985 averaged 650 yuan, 2.7 times that of 1979, while the per capita income of agriculturalists was only 291 yuan, 1.7 times that of 1979. It is interesting to note that the income of herding families compared well with that of urban ones (669 yuan per capita income), whilst the peasant farmer clearly lagged far behind.[62] Shine Barga Left banner, for example, is a relatively wealthy banner, and experienced a rapid rise in average income in the 1980s. In 1982 the average herding family's per capita income was around 320 yuan, whilst in 1984 it had risen to 687 yuan. (This compares favourably with neighbouring Huuchin Barga banner where the average was 458 yuan for the same year.) Friends have told me, however, that since 1988 the prices of animal products have failed to keep up with inflation, and it seems that the buying power of the average pastoral household has declined.

Estimates of average income, however, are of limited value, as the income of pastoral Mongolian families varies widely between areas as well as between individual families. Many places are considerably poorer than evidenced by the theoretical average earnings quoted in the official literature. In one *sum* of Shine Barga Left banner, for example, the average per capita income in 1984 was 182 yuan. On the other hand the unusually rich Dalai *sum* in neighbouring Shine Barga Right banner enjoyed a per capita income of 797 yuan, over four times that of the poorer district.[63] Both *sum*s earned most of their income from animal husbandry; although the wealthy one also had a small fishery industry, but the main difference between the two areas remained the profitability of animal husbandry. The major factors in this sort of variation between pastoral regions are the natural conditions (climate, vegetation, water supply, and other resources) which limit the number of animals that can be supported in the area; the population that must be supported by the local economy; the level of investment in the region; and the prices paid for animal products—often dependent on the proximity of a market for such produce.

This last factor can be surprisingly important, as transportation costs could be considerable. Selling to private entrepreneurs or directly to shops could

[62] Chang Chenhua *et al.* (1987: 57–8). These government statistics do not mention how the averages are calculated. They also mention that about half the increase in income between 1984 and 1985 was offset by rises in the price of daily living expenses. The considerable inflation the region is experiencing must be taken into account when considering these huge rises in income, as should the ever-present possibility that government statistics may exaggerate the increases in earnings.

[63] Bo Ching-je and Erdeniboke (1985: 16).

also give a much higher profit than selling to the state trading corporation. A herdsman close enough to Shilinhot to be able to sell animals directly to shops and work units in the city, for example, could hope to get a price of 150 yuan per sheep and 1,300 yuan for a cow in 1988; whilst in Shine Barga Left banner, more distant from large markets, the price of a sheep was about 80 yuan at that time and a cow would sell for about 1,000 yuan. The other consideration is whether there is a market at all for some produce, such as milk.

Bayan Gol had a milk collection facility, and a number of families earned 1,000–2,000 yuan a year from selling milk. Two of the pastoral households I stayed with in 1988 (those of Chuluunbaatar and Jamsran) sold milk throughout late summer and autumn, making between 500 and 1,000 yuan a month. Every day, shortly after dawn, Narangerel, Chuluunbaatar's daughter-in-law, after starting the fire in the stove and making tea, would go out with her two elder daughters, Odonchimeg and Altangerel, to milk the 30 cows that were kept near the *ail*.[64] With them would go Onor, a teenage girl from a poor family, who was employed to help with the milking. Chuluunbaatar and I, or one of the men, often accompanied them to round up the cows which were tethered by the wickerwork enclosure where their calves were kept at night. Milking took 2 hours or so, and was always done by the women, who then stored most of the 50 *jin* (25 litres) of milk in stainless steel churns. Five *jin* or so would be taken into the *ger*,[65] some to be drunk by me (a practice my hosts found faintly disgusting in an adult), most to be made into cheese, milk-tea, and curds. Sometime in the day the young man from the dairy would appear driving a small tractor which towed the six or seven large churns on a little trailer. He visited seven *ail*s every day, measuring the amount of milk he took from each one and noting it in a book that the herdsmen kept. Often he would stay for a meal at Chuluunbaatar's or Jamsran's, and he never needed to bring his own food when working. In the evening the cows would be milked again, producing another 50 *jin* or so, and the calves rounded up and placed in the pen. Jamsran's family made rather less than Chuluunbaatar's, having only about 20 cows, and selling 60 or 70 *jin* per day. However, the price was 0.4 yuan per *jin* at that time and so the family still made over 700 yuan a month from milk sales.

The rich Dalai *sum* in Shine Barga Right banner also sold milk to the local dairy industry, and this accounted for 14.7 per cent of the district's total income, but such facilities are far from common. Subsidiary industries can generate a lot of wealth. Almost a quarter of the income of Dalai *sum*, for instance, was due to the subsidiary fishing industry—making use of its location on the shores of the Buir lake. However, it is not only in the exploitation of natural resources, such as timber and fisheries, that investment is important. Areas that enjoyed high levels of local government investment, such as those that had been considered showpiece communes or where administrators enjoyed good relations with local government, can have more machinery, trucks, tractors, grass-cutting machines, enclosures, winter sheds for cattle, motorized pumps for wells, and better veterinary facilities.

[64] The *ail* (*hot-ail* or sometimes *hot*) is an encampment of between 1 and about 8 yurts (usually belonging to the same stem family) and it constitutes the smallest residential unit in pastoral regions.

[65] The Mongolian term for a yurt—a mobile dwelling made of felt or canvas stretched over a wooden frame.

The official figures show average incomes, but not the marked differences between the incomes of households within pastoral districts. This was a result of the wide variation in the numbers of animals owned by herding families; by 1988 some pastoral households owned none at all, whilst a few rich families owned over 2,000 head of livestock. Some such wealthy households had annual incomes of over 10,000 yuan at that time. The state had instituted a minimum income, however, and those who fell below it were entitled to a government grant. In 1987 this minimum annual income was set at 150 yuan.[66] Welfare, like most local government functions, was not entirely free from the widespread system of patronage, however. In Bayan Gol *sum* payments were made at the discretion of Damdinsüren, the head of the *Ardyn Yabdalyn Gajar*[67] (People's Affairs office), which handled welfare. He said that he paid some old people about 200 yuan a year, which was approximately equal to the minimum income set by the state. Although in fact Damdinsüren seemed relatively widely respected in the community as an honest individual, it was clear that in many cases welfare benefits were paid to client families who did some work for him. The most money he paid was about 1,200 yuan a year, but this included wages for work that the family did for Damdinsüren. He explained that poor families needed such employment, as well as the advice that he could give them as to how best to organize herding. Damdinsüren distributed money to about 100 families in the *sum*, most of whom were said to include adults who were unable to do much work because they were sick and had children to support.

The very richest section of the society was the officials, or those well connected with the administration, who had used their influence with the local government to amass some private wealth. The celebrated Seriteri, richest man in Shine Barga Left banner, and representative member of the Inner Mongolian People's Congress, reputedly owned 2,200 sheep and goats, over 200 cattle, 100 camels, and 100 horses. His annual income was conservatively estimated at 20,000 yuan from wool alone.

Rich and Poor

The division of animals between the production brigade members in 1983 had been fairly equal. However, there were several factors that from the onset

[66] *China Daily*, overseas edition, 27 July 1987.

[67] *Arad-un Jabudal-un Gazar*, classical transliteration.

gave certain families a better chance of success. First, the early reforms had allowed certain 'specialized households' to lease livestock, machinery, and facilities such as buildings and enclosures. Officials found out about the reforms first, and were empowered to authorize and implement them. Small wonder then that the individuals who took up such opportunities were generally officials and their relatives and friends. When the remainder of the commune's animals were divided, some households already had a good deal of the capital assets that make herding profitable—grass-cutting machinery, for instance, that allows hay to be made for animal feed in the winter. In some areas the officials simply took ownership of equipment and facilities without bothering with the cosmetic leasing arrangements. Secondly, the best areas reserved for haymaking were often allocated by local officials to themselves and their friends.

In Hulun Buir the winter of 1983/4 had killed almost a third of the animals in the entire region. During natural disasters of this sort, facilities such as winter shelter for livestock and reserves of hay to feed starving animals become essential. Having the use of particular areas of grazing—such as hillsides where the wind blows off the covering of snow—also makes a crucial difference to the survival of herds in such conditions. (It should be added that knowledge and skill at herding also plays an extremely important role at such times, and the new rich tend to have a high degree of know-how and initiative.) As a result it was generally those without access to the possessions of the new élite who lost most animals. Some lost all their animals in the same year that they had been given to them and the only way many of these families could survive was by working for wealthier herdsmen. In Bayan Gol, for instance, Dorj lost almost half his animals in the winter of 1983, while a neighbour, Nasan, lost all his livestock. In contrast, Lubsandorj, being a well-connected Party member with grass-cutting machinery and winter sheds, lost no animals at all.

Poorer men such as Bat, who ran the milk-tea shop, were bitter about the differences between rich and poor. He especially disliked the meanness of a local family headed by a widow. 'Oyundalai and her two sons have more than 1,000 sheep and goats, sixty cattle and forty horses, but they don't sell or eat a single animal—not even one!' he explained. 'They don't need to, they just make money by selling wool. They don't buy anything, they just get more and more animals. Other families have no animals; all their livestock died in the white disaster.' This disastrous winter in Hulun Buir can be seen to have speeded the process, but over time it seems that the same pattern of rich and poor emerged all over Inner Mongolia. A number of herdsmen expressed their resentment of officials who had become very rich. These officials once bossed the People's Communes, and many locals have become completely cynical about them. An informant in Shilingol, Batmönh, strongly disliked the local Party official, Nasan-Ochir. 'He has taken all the old Brigade's buildings and machines—the Romanian tractor, the small tractor, all the grass-cutting machinery. Now if I want grass for the winter I have to buy it from him; and the brigade's centre has become his house!'

There was a good deal of jealousy and ill-feeling about the distribution of property, even among officials and well-connected families, although such complaints were often an expression of enmities that have long histories. Lubsandorj openly accused Sodnom of dishonesty. 'Sodnom is a bad man,' he said bluntly. 'He has bad intentions. He wants my land for cutting grass, and he already has land of his own.' When I asked if he would agree to the transfer of land he shook his head emphatically. 'No, I won't give it to him. Sodnom was not elected [by Party members], he was appointed by the banner officials. People don't like him around here. He doesn't do his job; he takes the country's money but he does no work for the country—he only does work that is profitable for himself!'

Like many of the most deeply felt grievances, this feud stemmed from the Cultural Revolution era. Dorj and Sodnom had both been victimized as members of the Nei Ren Dang while Lubsandorj had been a Maoist zealot. These bitter memories split the *sum* community. When I asked Dorj if there were other hayfield disputes he laughed. 'You cannot imagine all the struggles that go on here!', he said. Sometimes when I was travelling to or from the *sum* centre with Dorj he would recognize passers-by and glare at them furiously. 'They are bad people', was all that he would say on the matter.

The Agricultural Bank of China played an important part in helping the new élite make money and employ labour. Many of those with influence in the Bank or the Communist Party had been given large loans to buy machinery and other equipment. One of the other rich men in Shine Barga Left banner, Tömör, was said to have been been lent over 150,000 yuan by the bank and owned a truck, two motorbikes, and six tractors as well as over 1,000 sheep and goats, 350 cattle, and 300 horses. Large amounts of money had been lent in this way. In 1987 the ABC had made loans totalling 414m. yuan in Hulun Buir to 'specialized households' which tended to employ labour.[68] In Chagaan *sum* in Shilingol, the bank had lent a total of between 200,000 and 300,000 yuan to herding households. Far from being spread evenly throughout the 550 pastoral households in the district, however, most of the loans had been of 10,000 yuan or more to ten or twenty households. These loans were made under the direction of the local Party head who recommended families for a loan and suggested how much it should be. The interest rates were also set at the discretion of the local bank and Party officials and varied from 8 per cent down to nothing. Considering the rate of inflation[69] this represented a significant subsidy given by the state to those with loans.

[68] Deng Shulin (1987*a*: 44–6).

[69] An increase in the cost of living of around 10% between 1984 and 1985 is mentioned in Chang Chenhua *et al.* (1987: 57–8).

On economic grounds one can identify three categories of pastoralist which emerged from the reforms of the 1980s. First, those wealthy families who had more animals than they could herd themselves, and therefore used hired help. Secondly, poor families who did not have enough animals of their own and were therefore reliant on payments from local officials or employers. Thirdly, pastoral families who had enough animals of their own but did not require much by way of additional labour.

Establishing the number of families in these categories was difficult; everyone knew some households in each of these situations, but could only guess at the total numbers. Sodnom, as second Party secretary in Bayan Gol, would not let me copy the local government records detailing the ownership of livestock, because he felt this might get him into trouble. Eventually, however, he agreed to study them and one day he came to Dorj's encampment where I was staying to describe for me the distribution of wealth in the *sum*. At that time about 40 per cent of the households had 200 animals or less, he reported, and about 50 per cent owned between 2 and 500. Only 10 per cent had more that 500 animals. There were some people with over 1,000 animals, but very few, Sodom estimated around 1–2 per cent. But he was reluctant to say how many households had lost all their livestock, or were very poor. My best estimate was between about 1 in 10 and 1 in 5 households. Many of the poorest pastoralists could be described as 'clients' using the typology that I suggested in Ch. 2, in that they had become dependent on wealthier families, either kin, officials, or employers (and sometimes all three). Most of the rich 10 per cent that Sodnom mentioned hired a number of herders for much or all of the year, and can be described as acting as patrons. The middle group, with between about 200 and 500 head of livestock, generally neither hired labour nor worked for other households. In this sense we can place them in the category of self-sufficient pastoralists.

This typology (of patron, client, and self-sufficient pastoralists) can be only a heuristic model. Real households only approximated to the categories outlined above, and in this way these three categories of herding households can be thought of as Weberian ideal-types. The family that I stayed with that most closely matches the ideal-typical patron family was that of Nasan-Ochir, described below. He employed four clients who herded animals and did other work for him. In return they expected more than just cash from Nasan-Ochir; they received hay for their animals, the use of his well, and help in emergency.[70] However, it would be misleading to suggest that these unequal power relations were simply a product of the pattern of ownership. The distribution of wealth itself was a product of the pre-existing power relations of the People's Communes. It was using their greater influence that commune

[70] Nasan-Ochir kept medicines, for instance, and treated the sick child of one of his clients when I was staying with him.

officials and high-status individuals gained crucial advantages in private herding and the race to become rich; and the power of local government officials still plays an enormous part in deciding who can make money.

It is clear, however, that many aspects of the contemporary employer–employee relationship have a traditional form. The spatial arrangement of the encampment denotes the relative status of the different households camped there. The tents of the client family[71] are generally placed to the east of family members, so expressing their junior status. This tradition, whereby sons also place their *ger*s to the east of their parent's *ger*, dates from pre-revolutionary times, and is still widely observed. The wealthy families that I stayed with gave their clients gifts, and hosted them for meals in their home, and this behaviour was also typical of pre-revolutionary relations of this sort.

Some Mongolian Households

These themes may be seen, to some extent, in the following sketches of some pastoral households that I stayed with in 1988. These are only brief snapshots, an attempt to show something of their day-to-day lives as I found them, but they may serve to illustrate the range of circumstances in which pastoral families found themselves after de-collectivization.

Nasan-Ochir's Household

Nasan-Ochir was a stern, 52-year-old Party man, who lived in a low, mud-brick house a few kilometres from Chagaan *sum* centre, Shilingol, with his wife Enhdulam (50), youngest son Hadchuluu, and daughter-in-law Gereltuyaa (both 25). The young couple had two children, a vigorous 1-year-old boy and a severely mentally handicapped 7-year-old son, Enhbat, who was kept out of the sight of casual visitors, but who was doted on by his grandmother Enhdulam. To accommodate his growing family, Nasan-Ochir was building an extension to his house when I stayed with him, adding two new rooms on the eastern side of the single-storey building. Always keen to emphasize his nationality, one of the first things that Nasan-Ochir told me was that this arrangement, by which the youngest son stayed at the parental home after marriage, was a Mongolian tradition. Nasan-Ochir and Enhdulam also had three other sons and one daughter who had married and moved to a neighbouring *sum*. The eldest son was a musician living in Shilinhot, the second son worked at the Agricultural Bank in the local *sum* centre and with his wife and young daughter would often visit, arriving on a noisy Czech motorcycle. Nasan-Ochir was a Party official, and with his good connections it is unsurprising, perhaps, that he had been lent over 10,000 yuan by the

[71] In most cases these would be 'assistant' families, as Ingold would term them. However, an 'associate' family who was staying with its patron would also place its tents in the junior position.

Pl. 2. Chinese builders extend Nasan-Ochir's house

bank. The third son also had a good position, working in the local administration of a nearby *sum*.

There were few animals evident around Nasan-Ochir's house, with its little walled compound, except two fierce dogs, an ox, and a couple of horses. However, the communist was a relatively rich man, owning more than 500 animals that were herded for him by poorer families on more distant pastures, while he and his family lived in the house. In late summer one of these clients—Jargal and his family—appeared with the sheep and goats, which were counted in Nasan-Ochir's enclosure; and I later met the other three men who worked for Nasan-Ochir at the nearby haymaking fields. Nasan-Ochir owned a small Chinese tractor and a large Romanian one, as well as grass-cutting machinery which was used for haymaking. Like the house and the surrounding enclosures, these facilities had belonged to the commune (in fact the trailer for the tractor still bore the commune's name). Near the house there was a well that was also considered Nasan-Ochir's property. It was freely used by his clients but other families had to ask his permission if they wished to water their animals there, although nobody had made such a request to date, he said.

The four herders that worked for Nasan-Ochir received 45 yuan a month, keeping his livestock and helping cut grass in summer. Nasan-Ochir owned

Pl. 3. Nasan-Ochir's workers use his grass-cutting machinery

483 sheep and goats that year, which I helped count, and about 50 cattle and 40 horses. I learnt these 'big livestock'[72] totals from neighbours as Nasan-Ochir was always evasive when asked about his wealth. (This too could be described as a Mongolian tradition: many herders consider it unlucky to declare the exact number of their livestock.) The haymaking area to which Nasan-Ochir enjoyed exclusive rights was approximately 1 sq. km. of excellent grassland. In mid-September he gathered his clients, who stayed in a makeshift *ger* nearby for the fortnight or so that they were needed, and cut hay using the large Romanian tractor, Nasan-Ochir's pride and joy, which no one else was allowed to drive. His son Hadchuluu was an excellent mechanic, stripping down and fixing machinery as it went wrong. Nasan-Ochir did not

[72] *Bod mal* is a Mongolian category of livestock including horses, cattle, and camels.

ask any of his clients to do the building work extending his house. Instead he hired a team of Chinese builders from Shilinhot, at a total cost of several thousand yuan.

The family also had a wind-generator which charged the three car batteries with which the family watched their black and white television—the only one I saw working in a herdsman's home at that time. Despite his wealth, Nasan-Ochir and his son wore the cheapest of cotton Chinese clothes, unlike Jargal—one of his clients—who wore a silk *deel* [73] (a gift from Nasan-Ochir). Although he might appear from his dress and brick house to be sinicized Nasan-Ochir was not. His diet and bearing were those of a typical *malchin* (herdsman), and the women of the household all wore Mongolian robes. Disliking Chinese, Nasan-Ochir himself had as little to do with them as he could and knew only a few words of their language. From time to time, however, it was impossible to avoid using Chinese. When I went with him to the *sum* centre to get some additional building supplies, for example, we found that the staff of the local government depot were all Han and did the paperwork in Chinese. Neither Nasan-Ochir nor I could understand what we were being told and in the end we had to collect a Mongolian friend living nearby who could speak Chinese to do the necessary translation. On the other hand, Nasan-Ochir was a Party member and a local government official and would reject Mongolian tradition where it clashed with Marxist doctrine. He said he never attended *oboo* or other religious ceremonies, and he was less observant of the elaborate traditional hospitality rituals that some Mongolian hosts insist upon, such as flicking three drops of alcohol with the third finger when accepting a glass, carefully seating guests in a place appropriate to their status, and so on. He also prided himself on his use and knowledge of technology such as the tractor and television, and the family stove that used coal delivered from a nearby mine rather than the traditional fuel of dried dung (*argal*).

Nasan-Ochir had been the head of the production team in the People's Commune, and he remained a Party official in the local administration. At that time the former production team (*bag*) still retained some vestigial administrative functions, and Nasan-Ochir kept the register of people and livestock in the *bag*. This small blue book noted that the *bag* contained a total of 47 adults and children, living in 10 households. These families had been allocated a total of 64,320 *mu* of land,[74] and were allowed a maximum number of 2,297 animals (the figure used to read 2,217 but the 1 had been changed into a 9, and whether this change was made legitimately or not I never discovered). This ceiling was set by local government in an effort to prevent overgrazing. Nasan-Ochir did not feel that overgrazing was a problem in his locality, but explained that it was his job to keep count of the number of animals and keep the register up to date, and Hadchuluu commented that if the number of animals was exceeded by a few it did not really matter. (From conversations with neighbours over the next few weeks, I became convinced that the official ceiling on the number of livestock was exceeded.) From time to time people of the *bag* came to consult the register and its keeper about the land they could use, where they could camp, and other matters.

[73] *Debel*, classical transliteration.

[74] Equal to 4,288 hectares.

Nasan-Ochir fitted well with my model of the pastoral patron. He employed the full-time labour of four clients, owned almost all the machinery that belonged to the old production brigade, and remained a Party official. He had used this position to gain a large loan from the state bank, and the exclusive use of a good haymaking area as well as the ex-communal buildings and machinery. He was not, however, an exceptionally rich man by local standards. Some of the richest herdsmen in the *sum* apparently owned two or three times as many animals as he did.

Jargal's Household

Jargal was one of Nasan-Ochir's employees and herded the rich man's sheep and goats for him. In late summer Jargal's family moved their *ger* next to the house (pitching their dwelling on the east side of the building) and for the next few weeks they stayed there, Jargal helping with haymaking, herding the sheep and goats on horseback, and watering them daily at Nasan-Ochir's well. He grumbled that his pay of 45 yuan a month was too little, dropping heavy hints about it whenever opportunity allowed. When he castrated one of Nasan-Ochir's sheep he grabbed a lamb shouting 'This is my castration pay!' to the amusement of the whole family but not of his employer, who remained stony-faced. He was 43 years old at that time, ten years older than his quiet wife who was 18 when she bore the first of their five children—they had two daughters, aged 15 and 2, and three sons aged 10, 7, and 6. The family owned 120 sheep and goats which they herded together with Nasan-Ochir's animals, and they had 6 cattle and 7 horses. They used the enclosures, hay stores, pasture, and wells claimed by Nasan-Ochir. The whole family lived in one battered old *ger* with felt coverings that had turned light brown from age. The conditions would have been more cramped but for the fact that the whole family was physically very short, Jargal being the only one who was more than 5 ft. tall. His eldest daughter, Narantuyaa, was old enough to ride and help Jargal with herding, and it was she who usually fetched the family's water from the well in the wooden container drawn by their solitary ox.

Jargal, although complaining about his pay, was cheerful enough in a thick-skinned way. He did not describe Nasan-Ochir as his boss or leader (*darga*), instead explaining that he and the rich man 'work together (*hamtran ajillah*)'. Whenever he was herding sheep near Nasan-Ochir's house he would usually eat there, and after Jargal's family moved alongside the house they often

visited for an evening meal, although Nasan-Ochir's family did not return the visits. Another informal benefit Jargal received from Nasan-Ochir was in the form of gifts; a bright blue silk *deel* was the latest of these, although it was quickly being reduced to rags as its new owner wore it continuously.

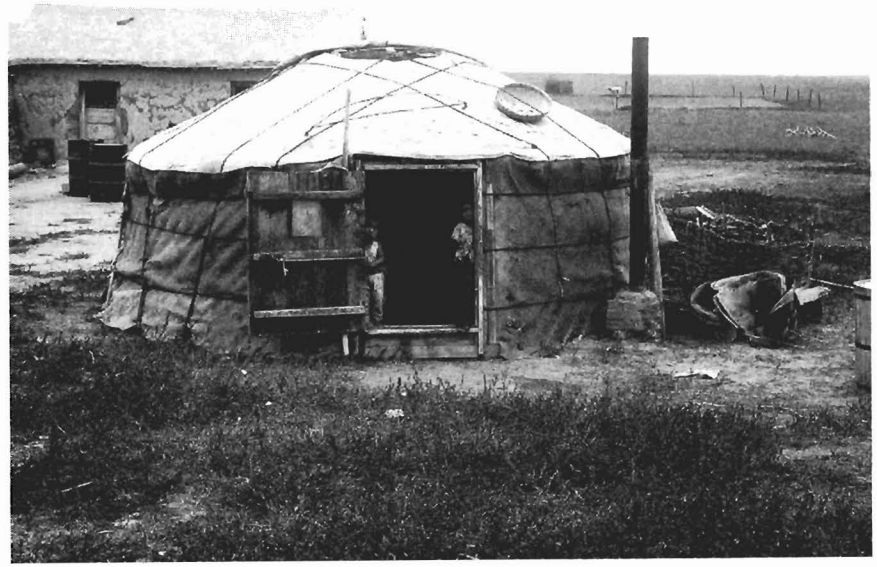
Although his wife did not read or write at all, Jargal could write his name in Mongolian and recognize some words. Their daughter, by contrast, could read and write with ease, having attended school until 14. Her 10-year-old brother was staying with relatives in the *sum* centre and attended school there, and the other children would be sent when they are older, Jargal said. The family kept three small, good-natured dogs, who fought a constant war of nerves with Nasan-Ochir's pair of huge and vicious black hounds, goading them, fleeing, and then grouping to drive them off. Nasan-Ochir refused to discipline these savage dogs, although they often bit visitors (including myself) and one of them seemed uncomfortably close to madness. Like many pastoralists he kept them, he said, as protection against thieves, and valued their fierceness.

Once the dogs attacked Jargal's 5-year-old son in broad daylight and badly gored the child's leg, biting a hole in his calf, before any of us could pick the child up. When he saw how deep the wound was, Nasan-Ochir grimly picked up a pair of sharp shears and went after the dog. I half-expected him to kill it, but instead he just clipped a tuft of grubby hair from its back and returned to stuff it into the boy's gaping wound and bind it up. I was convinced that this would lead to infection and that the boy's leg needed medical attention, and gravely repeated my warnings every morning after visiting Jargal's suffering son. Nasan-Ochir only chuckled at my objections to this traditional remedy and, to my surprise, the boy recovered in a fortnight despite (or perhaps because of) the hair of the dog that bit him.[75] Jargal always made light of the incident, insisting it was unimportant. Privately, however, when the two of us were returning alone from working together at the well, he suggested that I use a stick on the black dogs when they next went for me—a practice that Nasan-Ochir had forbidden.[76]

Jargal might be classified as a client. He was paid to herd livestock, but also gained a variety of other rewards, such as using the Nasan-Ochir's facilities for his own (much smaller) herd of animals. He treated his employer as his social senior, and received informal benefits such as gifts and meals in return. He talked about his relationship with Nasan-Ochir as a basically egalitarian one, although there was a clear but friendly status difference between them.

[75] I later found a reference to this traditional cure in the account of the missionary James Gillmour, writing in the late 19th cent.; see Gillmour (1893: 203).

[76] Indeed, it is traditionally considered bad manners to strike the dog of another household.



Pl. 4. Jargal's *ger*, placed to east of Nasan-Ochir's house

Dorj's Household

Dorj and Chimeg lived in Bayan Gol *sum* with their youngest daughter Nasanbayar (14), and their eldest son, Bat-Ochir who was 26 and who married Odongerel whilst I was with them. The couple had two natural daughters, the eldest (28) was married and lived with her husband nearby, and the second, 19-year-old Odonchimeg, was given to Damdinsüren (the head of the People's Affairs office and an affine) at the age of 1 month because Damdinsüren 's first child was born dead. Being unmarried, Odonchimeg still lived with her adopted family. Dorj and Chimeg's two other sons (20 and 18 years old) herded their animals and lived much of the time in *gers*, whilst the couple spent most of the year in his mud-brick house in the *sum* centre where Nasanbayar went to school. However, in the summer when I stayed with him, the couple lived in a *ger* next to one of their sons, some kilometres from the *sum*, so as to be able to supervise and help with the milking of their cows.

The family's animals—500 sheep and goats, 60 horses, and 70 cattle, were rotated between pastures in a yearly cycle of about 70 km. in radius. There were four seasonal pastures in this cycle, areas that the people of the *gachaa* (formally brigade number six) could use for their animals. The summer

pastures, *juslan*,[77] were about 40 km. to the east of the *sum* centre, and the area was such good grazing that people from other *sum*s habitually moved there to take advantage of the fine grass, so that a total of 700 to 800 *ail* were there during the summer months. However, families that had been assigned areas close to the *sum* centre kept their milk cows near it throughout the milking season in order to sell milk. In late summer the herds were moved back from the *juslan* to pastures about 30 km. north-west of the *sum* centre, and the sight of moving carts, horsemen, and herds of animals that dotted the landscape as far as the eye could see was spectacular. In winter the animals were moved to Dorj's winter pastures where he kept his milk cows, about 5 km. to the south of the *sum* centre, near a stand of pine trees. From there he might move them frequently from place to place to provide fresh pasture.[78] In spring the livestock was moved 5 km. to the south-east before the cycle began again in summer. In the summer and autumn the part of the family herding the livestock usually moved them a short distance two or three times a month, depending upon the available forage. In years when the grass grew plentifully they were able stay in a location longer before exhausting the available pasture. Movement was declining, however; even in the late 1980s some households were staying for most of the year in the spring pastures that they had been allocated, and in the early 1990s the allocation reduced pasture still further.

Dorj drank heavily, though not as much as his brother, Chuluunbaatar. He was articulate and educated, knowing Cyrillic as well as classical Mongolian script. Dorj used to be the accountant for production brigade number six until 1968 when he was arrested and tortured as part of the anti-Nei Ren Dang campaign, an experience that still haunted him and to some extent explained his addiction to alcohol. His drinking sometimes made him a difficult man to live with, and his wife Chimeg grumbled about his alcohol consumption constantly. (The only merit she saw in my presence, I think, was my limited first-aid kit and my generally futile attempts to stop her husband drinking himself unconscious.) Dorj was, however, an extremely articulate and skilled herdsman, who had the respect of the section of local élite that had been rehabilitated since the Cultural Revolution, one of whom—Sodnom the second Party secretary—had recently become his affine when his daughter married Dorj's son. Despite the fact that he was not an official, Dorj had a brick house and a small tractor for cutting grass. He made the wooden frame of his son's beautiful new *ger* entirely by hand, including the door, and often went with his sons to supervise the herding of the family's livestock. Dorj appeared to fall into the category of a rich, self-sufficient herdsman. He

[77] *Zusalang*, classical transliteration.

[78] This is described by the Mongolian term *otor*, a mode of herding involving rapid changes of pasture as the livestock is moved continuously in order to feed them intensively.

had several sons to herd his animals for him so that he did not need additional labour.

Dorj was cautiously optimistic about the future, declaring that his children were sure to be richer that he was. But the suffering of the Cultural Revolution was still alive for him, and he interpreted the present in the light of a horrific past, wondering if government policy might not change again. Paradoxically, his persecution remained one of the most important parts of his social life; an issue about which his family and friends were united. When I was leaving Bayan Gol, Dorj and all his family and friends gathered for a farewell meal. At one point Dorj asked me, 'What do you think of Mao?' and everyone waited silently for me to answer. When I questioned Mao's sanity, by way of reply, there was a sort of grim amusement among the company. They went on to discuss other figures of the era, national and local, as they often did, over endless glasses of alcohol. Other members of his family, such as his son, Bat-Ochir, tried to put the past behind them. Like many Mongolians of his generation he had had enough of the endless recriminations.

Chuluunbaatar's Household

Chuluunbaatar was a 56-year-old herdsman of the Seherid clan, living in Bayan Gol *sum*. He was more or less constantly drunk, and shared a *ger* with his long-suffering wife Chimid. His senile elder brother Gunchig shared a second *ger* with Chuluunbaatar's 19-year-old son Enhbaatar. The third *ger* of the encampment was occupied by the family of Chuluunbaatar's 34-year-old daughter Narangerel and her 37-year-old husband Baatar. Impressively hard-working and well-informed, the couple flouted the family planning regulations, and had five delightful children, aged from 2 to 14. Altangerel (the eldest), Odonchimeg, Biligtu, Bayar, and Soyoltu (the youngest). Baatar's dignified parents Damdin (of the Horchid clan) and his 67-year-old wife Amgalan also stayed with them. The whole of this stem family slept in one *ger*—which meant that when I was with them there were five adults and five children sharing the space. However, Baatar was so often away that summer herding animals (staying with one of Chuluunbaatar's other sons) that the *ger* was rarely completely full, and sometimes Damdin would share a *ger* with the near-deaf Gunchig to ease the overcrowding. The two families herded their animals together. Baatar and Chuluunbaatar's son, Dashbaatar, worked together moving the herds, whilst the rest of the camp stayed with the cattle near the *sum* centre in summer and early autumn to sell milk.

The animals were considered in some sense to be the property of the old men—Damdin and Chuluunbaatar—although Baatar actually directed most of the work and spoke of his father's animals as his own. Although Chuluunbaatar's family appeared richer, having two gers at the camp and spending much more money on alcohol, in fact it was Damdin and his son

Baatar who owned most of the livestock, having over 400 sheep and goats, more than 100 cattle and about the same number of horses. They also owned the wind-generator which they used to power an electric bulb that lit the *ger* at night. Chuluunbaatar owned about 300 sheep and goats, 40 cattle, and 40 horses. Damdin's family contrasted with Chuluunbaatar's in a number of other ways; although more than twenty years older than the alcoholic Chuluunbaatar, Damdin was mentally sharper and did not drink. Chuluunbaatar wrote with difficulty and read very little, whilst Damdin wrote beautifully in both classical and Cyrillic Mongolian. The older man was rarely idle, mending equipment with his tools when there was no other work to be done, while Chuluunbaatar would generally sit in his *ger* smoking tobacco and (as he proudly announced) drinking a litre bottle of 65 per cent alcohol every day. Chuluunbaatar had never been anything but a herdsman whilst Damdin, although he never admitted it, seemed to have been a lama, as were two of his brothers. Baatar took after his father, not drinking or smoking, and whilst Chuluunbaatar was vague regarding details of herding practice and livestock totals, Baatar and his father were precise and well informed. Dignified and industrious, Narangerel appeared much more at home with her husband's parents than her own, and rarely spoke to her father.

At that time, in 1988, the horses owned by the households of the district were pooled in a single herd of about 1,000 head, which included all the horses belonging to almost all the members of the former production brigade. Horses and other large livestock were marked with a brand to designate ownership, and there was a large number of such markings in use, Baatar's being a square design resembling the letter 'h'. Correctly identifying different brands was an essential pastoral skill. The first time I was given the responsibility of herding livestock without supervision, I mistook a brand that resembled an hourglass for Baatar's own, and rounded up an ox bearing this mark along with two that did belong to him. I drove all three for miles on horseback, returning them to the camp, wondering why the inhabitants of the *ail* I passed stared and pointed at the disappearing animals in amazement. It was only when I got back and noticed my mistake that I realized I was guilty of inadvertent cattle-theft.

The pool of horses were looked after in rotation by families who owned a section of the herd, unlike other types of livestock that were herded separately by the different families. The horses made almost no money for the family, Baatar explained, but they liked to keep them. He admitted, however, that he sometimes sold horses (at about 300–400 yuan for an unexceptional one), and that the family ate horse-meat in the winter because it was 'hot' food and kept you warm. Every week or so horses that had been ridden were returned to the herd and fresh geldings were cut out and saddled, with some effort.

Both Altangerel and Odonchimeg (the two girls) attended school in the *sum* centre, staying with the family of one of Baatar's sisters, who had a brick

Pl. 5. A visitor arrives at Baatar's *ail*

house there. In the summer months and winter holidays they would join their parents in their yurt. The girls seemed to prefer the village to the steppe and would often complain cutely that '*gers* are horrible!' in comparison with their aunt's building. They studied the classical Mongolian script and maths—both to a sufficiently good level for me to prove myself a hopeless failure when it came to helping with their homework.

A quiet 16-year-old girl came from time to time to work for the family during the milking season. Onor, burnt a dark brown from years herding in the sun, was almost silent in the presence of adults, although she enjoyed playing with the children. She slept on the floor in her clothes without blankets, and rode, dressed, and spat like a young man. She would not say if she was paid for her work, and the adults said she was not employed by them but was

just helping whilst she stayed. She was the only child of her 41-year-old father, and the family owned only 10 sheep, 5 cows, and 1 horse. It seemed that she had never attended school and when I invited her to write her name in my notebook she left hurriedly. Odonchimeg, writing the name for her, said no one knew if Onor could read or not. Chuluunbaatar and Damdin's households could be described as wealthy and self-sufficient, being neither employers nor employees. They did make use of some client labour (the girl Onor) but did not generally hire others to herd for them.

Nasan's Household

Nasan was a 40-year-old herdsman originally from another *sum* near Bayan Gol. He lived with his 38-year-old wife, his three sons and three daughters in a single *ger*. The family owned no animals at all, having had to eat or sell them all to make ends meet after the terrible winter of 1983/4, the *chagaan jud*[79] (white disaster). Although he did not strike me as an alcoholic, Nasan was considered to be something of a drunk and was described as lazy. Although Dorj and Chimeg were sympathetic up to a point, they held him partially responsible for his own poverty. Because of his reputation, perhaps, Nasan did not have a regular employer. He received a few hundred yuan a year from the *sum* People's Affairs office, and this income was supplemented with wages from his elder sons and daughters, who managed to do some work for rich herdsmen.

Damdinsüren explained to me that to employ poor people such as Nasan was no longer disapproved of by the communist administration, as it had been before the formation of the People's Communes. The pre-revolutionary terms for servants (such as *jarch*[80]) were still considered derogatory, and were not used to mean employees. When speaking to a foreigner, people tended to use euphemistic terms such as *habsragch*[81] (assistant or associate). Nasan's family was in the same structural position of pastoral dependency as Jargal's, in that the family owned very few animals and gained an income by working for other, richer, families. However, Nasan had not attached himself to a single patron, as had Jargal, but managed to survive on welfare benefits and his children's irregular employment. In part this may have been because he was not held in high regard as a reliable worker, but his situation represented a rather unenviable position of economic dependency without much by way of personal kin or friendly relations with wealthy persons who might be in a position to help him.

[79] *Cagan zud*, classical transliteration. [80] Written *zarci* in the classical script.
[81] Written *habsurugci* in the classical script, and *havsragch*, Cyrillic transliteration.

Batmönh's Household

Batmönh was a 52-year-old Üjümchin[82] Mongol living in Chagaan *sum*, Shilingol. He worked as a herdsman for the local branch of the state trading company, which supplied him with animals and rights to land-use when he moved to the region from Üjümchin in 1983. He lived with his 49-year-old wife Soyolma, although the couple had never held a marriage ceremony. They had two sons, the eldest of which was married, and a 17-year-old daughter. The eldest son was a champion wrestler, inheriting his strong build from his burly father, the family explained. Batmönh described himself as a vet, and was well educated, speaking some Russian as well as writing Mongolian in Cyrillic, and knowing the Roman alphabet. Although at first Batmönh told me that he had not gone to school at all, a visiting Üjümchin friend let slip that they had been teachers together before the anti-Nei Ren Dang campaign. It turned out that they had both suffered badly at the hands of Red Guards, and they liked to joke that writing in Cyrillic might still get them into trouble. Batmönh prided himself on being well informed on international current affairs, listening devotedly to radio programmes broadcast from Ulaanbaatar, the Mongolian capital. He liked to talk over the relative merits of Gorbachev, and the contemporary Mongolian political leadership,[83] whom he approved of, and Stalin and Mao, whom he detested. His experiences had made him something of a Mongolian nationalist, and he looked towards independent Mongolia with some longing. 'There are too many Chinese in Inner Mongolia', he would complain. Although he felt that Inner Mongolia should be united with the MPR he could see no realistic prospect of it. 'I am just happy to hear that a Mongolian is in space', he said, noting that the Russian space station *Mir* had recently received a Mongolian cosmonaut.

Batmönh kept over 300 sheep and goats, 30 cattle, and 30 horses for the state-owned Shilingol trading company. He was allowed to keep half the yearly increase in animals for himself, and kept all the income from wool sales for the entire herd. The family seemed to enjoy a good standard of living, having beautiful *deel*s, fine *jodog*[84] (wrestling costumes) for the sons, and having two large *ger*s and their own wind-generator. Batmönh was a conscientious herdsman. He took particular care of the horses, doting on the foals and sometimes giving them sugar, a treat generally reserved for children. Soyolma was a skilled seamstress, and made all the family's beautiful clothes herself. Occasionally she would also sell a *deel* or hat that she had made, usually through the trading company.

[82] *Yzymycin*, classical transliteration. These are Mongols of the two easternmost banners of Shilingol.
[83] At that time (1988), Premier Sodnom and President Batmönh of the Mongolian People's Republic.
[84] *Zodug*, classical transliteration.

Batmönh was in a different position from most herdsmen in that he herded animals belonging to a state organization, and owned only a dozen or so himself. Although technically a dependent of his employing institution, Batmönh was in a rather different position from pastoral employees such as Jargal and Nasan, as he managed the herds entirely himself and enjoyed a lifestyle similar to that of a middle-income, self-sufficient pastoralist. Ownership of animals alone is an imperfect guide to the overall position of pastoral families. In the pre-revolutionary pastoral period, those chosen to manage large herds for the rich herd-owning institutions, such as the monastery or banner treasury, were also often well rewarded for this responsibility.

State Power and the Social Transformation of Pastoral Inner Mongolia

For forty years pastoral Mongolian society had been subject to the social engineering of the Chinese communist state. After a series of enforced changes in the economic system and political structure, one would expect to see a matching set of transformations in the social organization and the cultural systems. After all, social forms do not simply persist as a result of some sort of social inertia, but are part of a continual re-creation of society, by which norms and values both reflect and inform day-to-day social interaction. We would expect change, then, as much as continuity, and after such revolutionary upheavals it might seem that the new social order had entirely replaced the old. But how total was the transformation, and are there identifiable threads of continuity running through the metamorphosis of pastoral Mongolian society?

In the Producers' Co-operatives a new élite of state officials assumed control in local communities, and introduced new 'relations of production'. Although they were not always popular, these cadres were supported by the formidable powers of social control of the young revolutionary state. However, there was a well-established precedent of powerful local officials from well before the communist control of the region. Banner officials had long exercised control over both land-use and overall pastoral management. The new communist officials were able to draw upon this established structural position for legitimacy as they widened state ownership. It was not a radical new departure, then, when the first co-operatives used the title Administrative President of Pasture for the head of the Producers' Co-operative. The pre-collective banner officials had long administered the pasture in a comparable way.

The change experienced in the era of the People's Communes can be seen—structurally—as an increase in the power of the local officials to organize and direct the rest of the community, and a strengthening of the hierarchy of administrative command. Local officials (brigade and team leaders)

were subject to the direct control of their new superiors in the commune. In this respect they experienced a decrease in autonomy at the same time as an increase in their authority over their subordinates. Positions in local government had, however, been the single most powerful system for allocating status even in the 1930s,[85] so that officials in the communes were the inheritors of this tradition. The People's Communes were widely perceived by local pastoralists as being a new form of local government, and their economic role was not without precedent. There was a long history of local authorities owning large numbers of livestock, and requiring the district's residents to herd them. The pre-revolutionary monasteries, for example, could own more than 60 per cent of the total livestock in a district.[86] The communes owned far more of the livestock than this, but in many ways the new relations of production that had been introduced in the collective period can be seen as a new chapter in the history of the duties that subjects had long owed to official representatives of the state. Indeed, the Mongolian adjective *alban* (meaning official or governmental) derives from the same root as the term *alba*, the feudal obligations that commoners owed their lord.

The theoretical grounds for the 'socialist transformation' and subsequent collectivization were ostensibly Marxist. Since the ideological superstructure of a society (including its civil and religious institutions) reflected the nature of the relations of production, it implied that once the Party had introduced collective productive relations the superstructural elements should begin to reflect the communal nature of the new economic order. At best this seems an explanation of the social change in pastoral Mongolian communities that offers only partial truths. Even if one accepts the assumptions of the Marxist explanatory model, recent history also shows that some ideological[87] or cultural forms have a high degree of independence from the existing relations of production. It has become difficult, for example, to sustain the old communist vision of Buddhism as merely a mystifying ideology that had legitimated the hegemony of the ruling class. Despite universal secular education and the destruction of the 'feudal' order with which Buddhism was identified, lamas remained respected figures for many herding families.

As a result of the new-found religious tolerance of the post-Maoist period, about 100 temples and monasteries had reopened in Inner Mongolia by 1992, and the number of lamas had risen to about 5,000, including 54 *hubilgaans* (reincarnated senior lamas).[88] Religious ceremonial, such as those at *oboo* (ritual cairn) ceremonies (in which lamas usually play an important but not

[85] See Vreeland (1962: 4).

[86] Lattimore (1940: 97 n. 50).

[87] My use of the term 'ideology' accords with Dumont's (1980: 263) description of it as a 'social set of ideas and values', the common cognitive system and knowledge of a community or society. I do not use the term in the narrow Marxist sense to mean a cognitive scheme that legitimates a ruling class.

[88] Mackerras (1994: 445).

Pl. 6. Buddhist temple being restored in the city of Shilinhot, Shilingol *aimag*, 1988

essential part) became widespread once again. It should be stressed that the persistence of cultural elements such as religious ceremonies and respect for Buddhist institutions was not a simple one. There is no denying that as far as a central explanatory model of the universe is concerned, Buddhist cosmology has been largely replaced by a scientistic one. The social meaning of religious knowledge has changed. This is to be expected—elements of the culture are reinterpreted and remanipulated constantly; and their use and meaning depend upon the changing situation the actors finds themselves in. The new political and economic facts of life had to be understood and expressed using the common cognitive systems that the actors possessed. This cultural system or repertoire came to include the new communist education for those who experienced it, as well as Mongolian traditions and norms. It is as part of the wider cultural field that elements such as Lamaist Buddhism became important once more, and this has happened because many younger Mongolians have a different understanding and use for religion than existed before the communist control of the region. Some cadres and several Mongolian students that I knew, for example, considered Lamaism to be valuable as an element in what they saw as traditional Mongolian culture. Although they sometimes attended ceremonies for this reason, they said that they did not really believe in the Buddhist faith. A

number of the older pastoralists I knew, however, had remained devout Buddhists despite the period of persecution. In the recent history of the region Buddhism and Mongolian national interests have often been attacked together; unsurprisingly, religion and traditional ceremonial had become associated with a defence of a distinctive Mongolian culture. Their revival was symbolic of the post-Maoist order.

Some elements of the communist agenda have been taken up by pastoral communities. The belief in basic equality between households, for example, found an important place in the popular imagination. The pre-revolutionary Old Society is now generally considered to have been offensively hierarchical, with too much suffering among the poor and too much luxury among the rich. (Indeed, it is not uncommon for even the apolitical to feel a certain disquiet at the recent re-emergence of marked differences in wealth between rich and poor.)

But within the Mongolian community the social language with which status is demonstrated (such as the relative statuses of seating positions in the *ger*, for instance, and other methods of showing respect), changed rather little. Only the categories of individuals that fill the structural positions of high and low status have been radically altered. However, the language and symbolism with which the new economic and political reality is expressed have not been revolutionized.

The actions of the Chinese state had reflected the communist leadership's conviction that economic and ideological spheres were inextricably linked, and could be transformed through political action. Marx supposed that 'The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of intellectual production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of intellectual production are subject to it.'[89] The communist authorities certainly had firm control of the means of material production. They also controlled and vigorously applied the public means of intellectual production and dissemination—launching endless media campaigns and political movements. This failed, however, to give the CCP control of the means of ideological and cultural *re*-production, which in pastoral Mongolian society might be better located in the domestic sphere. As time passed it became clearer that the state's ability to truly manage attitudes and beliefs was limited.

Similarly, control of economic resources (the means of production) had given the Party incomplete control of the relations of production. The People's Communes could not entirely transform pastoral households and expect them to remain highly productive; and the communal dining

[89] *The German Ideology*, iii, 46. Marx's concept of the means of ideological production is a slightly unclear one because, as Bloch (1983: 30–1) points out, the term 'ideology' is used by Marx in different ways at different times, not always meaning just those primarily moral, political, and religious ideas that legitimate the position of the ruling class.

experiments, for example, had failed throughout rural China. The reforms of the early 1980s indicated the new CCP leadership's willingness to find an accommodation with the domestic sphere—to allow the household some measure of autonomy in the interests of a more practical system of production.

6

The Pastoral Domestic Economy

Cultural Models and the Household

Gender roles and an associated division of labour remain central elements in Mongolian culture. Layers of symbolism exist to express these cultural forms, and in some ways they remain stronger as parts of a conceptual scheme than as a practical guide to work. However, these principles remain the greatest single factor in the allocation of tasks in most pastoral households. The female sphere of competence and responsibility includes preparing food products (such as cheeses, yoghurt, and blood-sausage) cooking, making and repairing clothes, washing, childcare, cleaning the *ger*, milking, making tea, and looking after animals close to the *ail*. Women and children also usually collect the dried dung that is used for fuel. In fact some of these tasks may be done by men from time to time, but the responsibility for their completion is generally held to be that of the senior woman of the household. Seniority plays an important part in the amount and type of work that women do. Adult daughters and young wives who have married into a household usually do more work than older women, although the more senior women can sometimes provide as much childcare as the busy mothers of the children.

Tasks that are traditionally considered appropriate for males include all those associated with herding animals some distance from the *ail*, and finding them if they stray. Apart from this they are also generally expected to undertake the killing and skinning of livestock, castration, harnessing animals, and loading *ger*s and heavy goods onto carts, repairing *ger* frames, carts, saddles, and harnesses. Other pastoral tasks that are generally done by men, although women may help, include lassoing and breaking horses, cutting and transporting grass (hay) in the summer, making and repairing enclosures and animal sheds, and other associated tasks. Many herding tasks are generally done by both male and female pastoralists, such as penning and counting livestock, shearing sheep, and combing goat hair.

The senior man in a *ger* is usually expected to act as the host when receiving and entertaining guests, and the senior woman is generally responsible for making them tea and sometimes food (although she may delegate the actual preparation to a junior woman or girl). The male role is not just a question of seniority, as the more physically active men tend to be allocated more distant work and old men are more frequently in the *ger*. Indeed, if a man has enough sons or hirelings to look after his herds he can spend a good deal of time at home. In this case he usually does little domestic work, but will do a

good deal of socializing (often drinking) with similarly senior men. As household head the senior man must also take formal responsibility for financial affairs, although in fact his wife and other members of the household usually have an important part in making such decisions.

In practice there is a large amount of overlap between male and female work. If they are without the company of those of the opposite gender, men and women have to cope with both types of work. Men cook when there are no women around (such as when they are working far from their *ail*) or if their wives are ill. If they are in the household men will often provide some level of childcare, and sometimes help prepare food—particularly when the family treats itself to *bansh*[1] (delicious meat dumplings) which the whole family usually makes together. When the men slaughter a sheep for instance, the entire family helps prepare the meat for drying so that it can be stored; this involves dicing the flesh into small cubes. Women, especially those without young children, also help herd animals, usually those closer to the *ail*, but sometimes distant herds, and they participate in a wide variety of other ostensibly 'male' tasks if there is a reason to.

The other important principal for the division of labour is age. Elders are generally considered to be social seniors, and those of parental and grandparental rank are particularly respected. When young, both male and female children will be given light tasks considered appropriate to their capacities, such as herding lambs and kids on foot and gathering dung for fuel. In general when they are not at school they are expected to assist older family members of their own gender. As they get older, children are introduced to gender-appropriate tasks when they are thought able to accomplish them, and by their early teens they are usually capable of doing most day-to-day jobs. The older adults generally direct the work of younger members of the residential group within their gendered area of expertise. Mature and elderly adults have often developed skills to a level that is generally admired, such as tailoring clothes or herding a particular species of animal, so that their advice is frequently sought.

In effect then, the domestic division of labour in Mongolian pastoral communities amounts to an association between age and gender on the one hand, and certain skills and types of work on the other, so as to form a fairly flexible guide to action. In this sense it resembles the conceptual division of domestic space in that it forms a set of codes of conduct for appropriate behaviour, rather than strict prohibitions. Between them they form a matrix of principles with which an individual in a given context can identify socially acceptable activity that is compatible with an individual's age, sex, and standing, whether in their own home or in someone else's.[2]

[1] *Bansi*, classical transliteration.

[2] Humphrey (1983: 190) describes the Buryat division of labour in similar terms.

Since the dissolution of the People's Communes and the expansion of the domestic unit's economic role, family members have had to undertake a wider range of tasks. In the commune period vehicles, machinery, transportation, and herding equipment were the responsibility of the *brigad* and repaired by specialists. After privatization these assets became the private property of the households, and had to be maintained by them. To women fell those activities that required skills associated with the female sphere, such as sewing harnesses, buckets, and cart-coverings. Men needed skills associated with their domains—machinery, carts, wooden frames, riding tack, and saddles. The more liberal attitude towards the expression of Mongolian culture has also led to an increase in the wearing of *deel*s and other traditional Mongolian clothing. These are generally made by women, who often take a good deal of pride in both the appearance and quality of their handiwork. There is, however, a saying, *geriin ajil nüüdend haragdahgüi*, 'housework is invisible (to the eye)', that is, women are always busy but their work is often overlooked. On the other hand, people do recognize a well-kept *ger* or *baishin* (house) when they see one, and generally attribute it to the hard work of the active woman of the family. *Yalaa haltarmaa cheberhan bain*,[3] they might remark—'so clean a fly would slip'.

The stem family is the principal property-owning corporation, with a head who has formal authority over its assets. The composition of this unit varies widely, although membership reflects the phase it has reached in the cycle of the domestic group. It usually consists of a couple, their unmarried children, and the nuclear families of their married sons. However, membership is highly flexible and may include a married daughter, or an unmarried sibling, and it might exclude one or more married son. The head of the family is usually the eldest man but may be his wife if he is absent or dead. In general the head has an obligation to support and consult other family members, especially those of his own generation.

The residential unit, which can be located in an encampment (*ail*), or in a house (*baishin)*, is what I termed the household. It usually consists of the stem family plus, in the case of the *ail*, any relatives, friends, or client families that might be close enough to join the encampment. The household head is, therefore, often the head of the stem family that constitutes the core of the residential group. The composition of the *ail* is highly variable, however, as in different seasons of the year sections of the family may move elsewhere, or even join another *ail* if it is more convenient for herding. The composition of the group of people who share one *ger* also varies, but it is often a nuclear family (a couple and their unmarried children). Upon marriage a couple will, if their families can afford it, move into their own *ger* or building. When they are young, their children share the dwelling with them. If they

[3] *Ilag-a xalturm-a ceberken baina*, classical transcription.

can afford it a couple may buy a second *ger* when their eldest children approach adulthood, to ease the overcrowding, but most families will not do this until one of their sons marries. Some poor families cannot afford to buy a second *ger*, and the newly married couple may have to share the parental dwelling until enough money can be saved to buy another one.

The traditional Mongolian conception of kinship offers an implicit social order with senior social status being identified with age and generational position. Kuo-yi Pao's description of Horchin Mongol kinship[4] paints a picture of a rather strictly hierarchical family structure, and an authoritarian, male, household head. In comparison, modern Inner Mongolian family life appears much more relaxed.[5] In the pastoral regions that I stayed in, senior members of a household directed work in a relaxed and seldom dictatorial way . There were, however, marks of respect shown by younger people to their elders. Narangerel, in Bayan Gol, for instance, always addressed her father using the more formal polite term for 'you' (*ta*), and the Mongolian symbolic system provides a constant means of ranking individuals by age and gender. However, in day-to-day life the relations between family members are generally relaxed. The expectation is that the family head will consult the other family members before reaching an important decision, and that bonds of love and respect cause family members to consider each other's interests and feelings carefully.

It is interesting to note the strength of the norms regarding inheritance and the family head's nominal ownership of the animals. Although livestock was distributed on the basis of an equal number to each adult, regardless of gender and age, the family's animals were immediately pooled and conceived of as joint property under the management of the family head. This demonstrates a powerful norm of corporate family ownership, and the authority of the family head remains high. It is true to say, however, that this model of property relations was also implicit in the government's conception and implementation of the Responsibility System, which designated the household as the unit of property management. But the Responsibility System certainly did not create this model of the household, which predated the communist government. Along with the complimentary concept of the *ejen* (head, master, or owner) the cultural form of the domestic unit persisted despite the collectivization of the economy, and as a result of the privatization of the herds it has been able to structure working practice and property relations once more.

[4] Pao (1964*b*: 279–95).

[5] Part of this difference may be a result of the fact that Pao was describing life in an agricultural Mongol area. It seems that his description is one of family life in the 1930s (see Pao 1964*a*: 57), and it is probable that the authority of the head of the household was stronger than it is today. It may also be that the familial traditions of China had influenced the Khorchin, who have long been in close contact with them.

Although the family is indeed the unit for ownership, and the head of the family is only 'in charge' of it, the *ejen* (as formal representative of the unit) is still much more personally associated with property than are other members. Junior family members generally talk of the household assets as 'ours', and in the case of Baatar—a mature man who directed most of the herding—occasionally as 'mine'. However, when pressed, he and other family members would agree that the animals belonged more to their father, Damdin, than to anyone else, and the old man always described the herds as his own property. When the members of one *ail* talked about some other family's property they were always referred to as belonging to the household head—'Damdin's animals' or 'Sodnom's house'.

An increasing number of pastoral households now live in houses for part or all of the year. Again, a common form for the household is the stem family (a conjugal couple living with their unmarried and one of their married children). However, there is a tendency for more family members to stay with their parents if they have a house. In the 1990s the Shilingol authorities instituted a formal group of households, the *hot*—usually composed of close kin. The term derives from the pre-revolutionary *hot (hoton, hot-ail)* described in Ch. 2. Unlike the earlier form, however, in the 1990s *hot* each constituent household was allocated grazing land, as far as possible alongside that of other member households so as to form a larger joint area of pasture. The constituent households generally herd their livestock jointly, often in rotation and with different members of the group specializing in an animal species. At lambing and shearing time the family members will generally look after their own animals, and not those of the other families in the *hot*.

Pastoral districts register households as belonging to settled *hot*s composed of buildings (or one long building including several households), and mobile *hot*s living in *ger*s. In a typical pastoral *sum* in Shilingol in the early 1990s, about half the herding households were in each category.[6] However, as *ger*s can be moved alongside houses or to other locations, this reflects administrative rather than residential reality; and families with houses may also have a *ger* for use in the summer. Pastoral families retained some flexibility, sometimes detaching family members to move to seasonal pastures with the livestock. However, the allocation of land and general decline in pastoral mobility means that an increasing number of households spend all year in the same location. This is very different from the pre-revolutionary pastoral *hot*, which was of inconstant composition, a fluid residental form. Indeed, even in the case of mobile *hot*s, by registering the group membership and allocating land in this way, the administration seems to be forcing a permanence upon what would in the past have been a semi-permanent grouping.

[6] Humphrey and Sneath (1999: 213).

Sedentarization leads to an increase in some types of labour. Cleaning the livestock enclosures and sheds was always a good deal of work, for example, but there is more of it if livestock are using them all year round. On the other hand, staying in one location frees the family from making exhausting seasonal moves, loading and unloading household goods. Most pastoralists that I knew with houses felt that living in a permanent dwelling was a good deal easier and less work than in the mobile felt *ger*, although several worried about access to good grazing land.

Daily Pastoral Life

The pastoral encampment or house is a busy place, and the day generally starts shortly before dawn when the adults begin to wake and one of the women lights the fire in the metal stove (*juuh*)[7] and begins to prepare tea. Mongolian tea is made with salt, and the coarse, twiggy black brick tea is boiled hard for a while before milk is added and brought back to the boil. The mixture is then ladled so as to cool it and keep the mixture from boiling over and to mix and froth the ingredients. When it is ready, a little tea is often thrown outside, an oblation to the spirits or, some say, just for luck. The bowls of tea are passed around, the most senior person being served first, and the rest put into thermos flasks and kettles for use later in the day. With the tea there is often dried millet (*shar budaa*) which is put into the tea to warm and soften, often with some *aaruul*—the thin peices of dried curds that are customarily presented as a rock-hard snack for any visitor. Infants who are old enough for solid foods are fed by their mothers chewing the food in their own mouths first before passing it, a mouthful at a time, to the child.

After breakfast the men usually see to the livestock, and the women start on the milking, if there is any to be done. Calves are kept separately from their mothers (usually in small enclosures made from wickerwork, mud walls, or fencing). The cows stay near their young overnight and can then be milked in the morning, the women moving from cow to cow with bucket and stool. After lambing, sheep and goats are dealt with in the same way and can also be milked, if the women wish to go to the trouble. Riding horses are usually left out overnight to graze, with a hobble so that they do not stray too far, and the men find and saddle them. When the milking is finished the cattle are driven off in one direction, and the sheep and goats herded towards different pastures. Horse herds generally roam further away than the other livestock, and to locate them and move them back into the correct pastures if they have strayed can take a good deal of time on horseback. Herding sheep and goats, even cattle, can be done on foot if there are no horses, or by motorbike where the terrain permits it and the family is wealthy enough to afford

[7] *Zuuv-a*, classical transliteration.

one. Horses, however, are best herded on horseback, using an *uurga* (pole-lasso) to catch the ones for riding, or the foals if there are mares to be milked. After the adult livestock have been driven off, the lambs and kids can be taken out to pasture near the encampment, often by one of the children.

If there is a river, lake, or stream nearby then watering the animals is usually just a matter of driving them towards it and then moving them off to the pastures afterwards. In many places, however, the water supply is a well, and in this case the watering is more laborious, usually having to be done by hand using a bucket on a pole and rope, although in some places herders own small petrol-driven pumps that they use to fill the water-troughs with. In winter, when there is no milking to do and the weather is bitterly cold, people spend much more time indoors. Usually (but not always) it is the men who go out to water, drive out, and bring back the livestock, and often the women or children who fill sacks of dried dung (*argal*) with fuel to keep the stove burning and without which the house or *ger* would quickly freeze. Those households that can obtain and afford it often prefer to use coal or wood as fuel, which provide much more heat than *argal*, and are less laborious to collect. Time is passed playing chess, or games using *shagai* (sheep anklebones),[8] listening to the radio, repairing or making something, playing with the children. Without much by way of milk products the winter diet is generally meat-rich, if at all possible. Generally the livestock will be brought back to the encampment each night, except the more mobile horses and camels. Sometimes the weather will get so bad that the livestock will be kept in the enclosure (or brought back to it) in the day and fed hay as they stay warm by huddling together. Many winter sites (*öböljöö*) have sheds for the animals to help protect them from the severe cold, particularly if the pastoral household has a built dwelling. Throughout the year storms or bad weather may drive livestock off, so that they have to be relocated and brought back.

At some point in the day the women will process the milk. The cow's milk may be mixed with any sheep's and goat's milk that the family has, and is then boiled in the single great round pot (*togoo*)[9] in which all the cooking is done. When it begins to boil over the woman (or in her absence anyone who is nearby) ladles the milk to cool it. After a while the milk begins to separate and is left to settle; the whey is poured off (it can be given to animals) and the curds set aside. To make *aaruul*[10] the curds are allowed to sour and are drained in a cloth bag before being cut into slices and placed out on the roof of the *ger* to dry. Curds can also be used to make types of cheese (*huruud* or *byaslag*[11]), although this is less common as it takes more time and uses more

[8] There are a number of these, but a favourite involved throwing down several dozen of the little bones. Depending on the way each bone lies it represents a species of livestock—sheep, goats, horses, and cattle. Players then flick bones so that they strike others representing the same species to accumulate a 'herd'.

[9] *Togug-a*, classical transliteration.

[10] *Agaruul*, classical transliteration.

[11] *Xurud* and *basilag*, classical transliteration.

curds. The milk may also be used, after boiling, to make a sort of yogurt (*tarag*) by leaving it to ferment in a container that has had the culture in before. Mares are also milked in the summer, although this is difficult because the foal must first be allowed to suckle the mother to start the milk flowing before a woman can start milking. Although mare's milk is more trouble and less plentiful than cow's milk, it is much more highly valued because it can be made into *airag* (koumiss), the delicious alcoholic drink. This involves mixing air into the fermenting mares milk by churning it with a special stick, if possible several thousand times.

A family will often skip a cooked midday meal, making do with plenty of tea with *aaruul*, millet, or biscuit, sometimes a little dried meat, perhaps some butter placed in the hot tea to melt and leave a thick yellow film on the top. It is often at the end of the day, as it grows dark, that the main meal is cooked, again in the single pot, by the light of a candle, or (if they have a wind-generator) a single electric bulb. The meal is usually a broth containing noodles made from wheat flour, boiled with some cubes of dried meat. Bowls of food are handed out by the cook in order of seniority, the head of the household first, then guests and family members in loose order of age and seniority. Before eating a small piece of food is often flicked onto the hearth by the metal stove. This custom is most often followed by the older and more religious household members and guests. Sometimes the cook will perform this tiny ritual herself, before serving up. These are offerings to the *gal golomt*,[12] the hearth and symbolic focus for the household. In the past, when a son married and moved away with his new *ger* and share of the livestock there would be a short ritual called the *gal salgana*—the division of the fire—whereby flaming embers from the parental stove were taken to start the fire in the stove of the new household.

After eating the family usually goes to bed, although if there are visitors the *geriin ejen* (household head) may decide to share a drink. This is usually done with some ceremony, the bottle of alcohol (*har arih*) taken from its place (usually in a cabinet or case behind the *hoimor*) and a fine bowl or a set of small glasses set out. If opening a new bottle of alcohol the host will sometimes pour out the first drops into a glass and flick it into the air, as an oblation. If the host is using a bowl he will fill the bowl and then pass it to each person in turn, starting with guests, who will then drink from it and return it to be refilled. For an honoured guest this may be done three times, and the usual response is to sip from the bowl each time before returning it. It is useful to know this: on my first day in a pastoral encampment I managed to earn myself an entirely unwelcome reputation as a hardened drinker because I had been told by a mischievous Mongolian friend in Hohhot that it was extremely impolite to fail to drain a bowl of alcohol if it was offered to me. Presented

[12] *Gal golumta*, classical transliteration.

with a large and brimming bowl of neat *har arih*, not once but three times, I somehow managed to drink each one, while my faintly puzzled host dutifully refilled the bowl each time.

Hospitality, Gifts, and the Economy

Notions of hospitality are central to Mongolian life. Visitors are almost always asked into the *ger* for tea at the very least, and often food, alcohol, and a smoke. Apart from the wider significance of this behaviour, there is, from a functionalist perspective, an excellent economic 'reason' for Mongolian hospitality norms. Moving across the steppe would take a good deal of preparation if one could not count upon dropping in on any of the *ail* in the area and getting something to eat and drink—tea and curds always, and often a full meal. This facilitates movement, and when herders move animals some distance from their own *ger* it allows them to get a hot drink and food conveniently. This strong norm of hospitality means that whilst ownership is now generally private, daily consumption (especially of food) is relatively public in that it is generally open to visitors.

Gifts are another major feature of pastoral life. The patterns of gift-giving follow the networks of social relationships within a Mongolian community. But although gifts are important, it is problematic to suppose a distinct mode of 'gift exchange' as opposed to 'commodity exchange' (using these terms as Gregory does[13]). Indeed, such a distinction is less than useful in describing the range of ways in which goods move in the community, which may include sale, barter, gifting, and sharing. The role that gifts play in different social relationships can be better understood by examining the contexts in which they are generally given. Although the categories often overlap, six of the main contexts for gift-giving are: hospitality, marking kinship and friendship relations, marking economic relations, a marriage ceremony, as a political act, and as a religious act.[14]

If relatives or friends have not seen each other for some time, for example, they will take a present when they visit, and the longer the separation had been the better the present should be. If someone falls sick or leaves the region (to join the army or attend higher education, for example) then friends and relatives will usually visit and give presents to wish them well. Similarly, if an old individual announces a *nasyn bayar* celebration of their advanced

[13] Gregory (1982: 41–2). Yang (1994: 178–9) (after Polanyi) uses a tripartite scheme that includes state redistribution. My interest, however, is in a range of ways in which objects are transferred, rather than in distinguishing modes of *exchange* which imply that the relations concerned are reciprocal by nature.

[14] Zhukovskaya (1983: 100–9) gives four main areas for gift-giving. My typology includes all but two of the instances that she mentions. The first is sworn brotherhood which I never encountered, but which would fall into the category of political action. The second area is that of gifts given by vassals to their feudal lords, which I do not mention because I attempt to describe modern practice.

age, the guests will bring gifts. Gifts are sometimes taken when visiting at *Chagaan sar* (the lunar New Year).[15] At weddings and on the birth of a child it is expected that visitors will bring presents. Up to one month after a son or daughter is born the gifts should be for the mother, especially food to help her rebuild her strength. After this the presents can be for the child, clothes and toys for instance. When a family uses or borrows something belonging to another family a gift is usually given in return, and these customs mark economically significant relations in such a way as to reinforce the notions of obligation and ownership. The act of giving and receiving a present has its own formal stance, and the symbolic aspects of giving must also be observed, so that one should never give something that is empty. If, for example, one was to present someone with a snuff-bottle (*höörög*)[16] it should contain a token quantity of snuff.

It is still important for a herding family to retain good relations with officials and other powerful individuals. Gifts (including lavish hospitality) to such people are seen as a means of establishing and reinforcing good relations. In this way the gift makes use of the cultural norm of reciprocity to place an obligation upon the recipient to help the giver. Such relations can be compared to those of *guanxi* in urban Han Chinese society, which Yang describes as involving 'the exchange of gifts, favours and banquets; the cultivation of personal relationships and networks of mutual dependence; and the manufacturing of obligation and indebtedness'.[17] In the smaller social fields of pastoral Mongolian communities, however, although gifts and hospitality are also used to 'manufacture obligation' they tend to coincide with other relations such as those of kinship, neighbourhood, or economic interest, rather than the extended rhizomatic networks that Yang describes.[18]

The widespread practice of cultivating social relations through the giving of gifts creates an ambiguity at the boundary between the acceptable gift and the illegitimate bribe. When it comes to more distant officials, ones with whom there is little or nothing by way of pre-existent social relations, 'gifts' may be used to curry favour in a fairly instrumental way. Many pastoralists have gained a rather cynical view of the state administration, noting that when making a request to Chinese officials they will often respond with the phrase, *yan jiu, yan jiu*, meaning 'we'll discuss it, we'll discuss it'. This is a standard noncommittal answer, meaning that the officials will consider the matter. Although the Chinese characters are different, the sound of this phrase resembles two Chinese words known to most Mongols, *yan* and *jiu*, meaning 'cigarettes' and 'alcohol'. The joke (also widely made by Chinese) is that the officials customarily respond to a request with one of their own, 'cigarettes and alcohol, cigarettes and alcohol'!

[15] *Cagan Sar-a*, classical transliteration. It is traditional to visit relatives, neighbours, and friends to greet and embrace them.

[16] *Kogerge*, classical transliteration.

[17] Yang (1994: 6).

[18] Ibid. 307–9.

Presents have become more expensive, and their diversity has increased since the dissolution of the communes, reflecting the increased choice and buying power of the Mongolian pastoralists. The type of objects that are usually given as gifts can be loosely separated into two categories. Objects with use value, such as bricks of tea, cloth, thermos flasks, sugar, and sweets; and objects with ritual and entertainment value, such as alcohol, cigarettes, and *hadag* (ceremonial silk scarves). Of these common gifts most have a potential ritual use as gifts themselves, and many are used in hospitality. The cultural norm is that a guest will be offered tea at the very least, and often alcohol, sweets, and cigarettes. These sorts of goods can be seen as the currency of hospitality, used in the rituals of sociability. Marriage gifts are more substantial, however, representing the start-up capital for both housing and herding for the new couples. In this case the newly-weds ritually 'give' in return status and honour to the donors, both ceremonially at the wedding service, and through their actions in everyday life.

If one takes the giving of gifts to mark social relationships, then certain religious practices can be seen as a means of symbolically integrating spirits into the network of social relations that define and support the human community. As is described in Ch. 8, the *oboo* ceremony, the most common public religious rite generally carried out by Inner Mongolian pastoralists, involves the ritual presentation of offerings to various spiritual entities who are considered to have control over natural conditions and disease in the locality. It is interesting to note that the type of objects that are used as offerings at *oboo* ceremonies are the same as are given to honoured humans—*hadag*, clarified butter, sweets, tea, and alcohol. In giving presents to such entities the participants could be seen to be drawing them into an obligation of reciprocity with the human community. They are also making protestations of loyalty and respect that mark the ritual posture of a social junior to a social senior—as a client would act towards a patron or an individual towards his or her elder relatives. Again the same cultural system is used to express relationships and is reinforced in so doing. In pre-Buddhist times small tokens of food and drink were given to the felt *ongod* idols[19] that were kept in each *ger*. This could be seen to be an attempt to bring the spiritual exchange-partner right into the family; indeed as the term *ongon*[20] also means an ancestral spirit it can be seen that in some sense these spirits were family members.[21]

[19] An ancestral spirit inhabiting a material object, usually a small felt figure. They were widely kept in the *ger* in pre-Buddhist Mongolia. See Humphrey's description of Buryat *ongod*, Humphrey (1971: 271–2). In the classical script the term is written *onggud*.

[20] The singular form of *ongod*.

[21] Indeed, William of Rubruck, the 13th-cent. monk, notes that these felt idols were called the 'master's brother' and the 'mistress's brother' (see Dawson 1955: 95–6). Even today some families also observe the practice of placing a small quantity of milk, tea, and alcohol into a case containing the holy *burhan*, lamaist images.

Luxury goods became increasingly affordable for the herdsmen in the 1980s, particularly the rich. Radios, thermos flasks, motorcycles, watches, and binoculars were favourite consumer items. However, it is interesting to note the availability of traditional Mongolian luxury goods such as rich *deel*s (robes), Homburg style hats, long leather boots, *hadag*, Mongolian knives and jewellery, pictures of Chinggis Khan, and other items. The state's decision to authorize the production of goods in these 'traditional' styles has allowed Mongolians to buy commodities that stress their ethnicity, and the result is that this sort of product is very popular in pastoral communities. Racehorses are traditionally highly valued, and the best of them are now bought and sold for thousands of yuan. I also heard of similarly huge prices being paid for antique traditional snuff-bottles, although none of my informants would admit to having such a valuable asset. Taken together these provide a variety of ways in which Mongolian identity can be expressed through distinct forms of consumption.

Despite the growing commercialization of the pastoral economy, many of the economic arrangements I encountered were informal. The notion that family members should be paid individually for the work that they carried out was not taken seriously by my informants. Nasan-Ochir's adult son, Hadchuluu, for example, said that if he needed money for something he simply asked his father and the old man would provide it if he felt the family could afford it. Within the family neither the work-point system of the People's Communes, nor the more recent introduction of the 'socialist market', had undermined the traditional model of joint family property, managed by the head of the household. Helpers who are not part of the stem family, however, are usually paid wages for their work, although they generally receive other, informal, benefits. In 1988 such wages for full-time pastoral employees were around 40 yuan a month, but in the case of Nasan-Ochir and Jargal at least, no written contracts were drawn up between them to formalize the relationship. This indicates Jargal's expectation that his employer would be bound by customary notions of honour; that their economic arrangement was embedded in social relations.

Economic Aspects of the Pastoral Household

In general, as a pastoral household gets older its herds tend to expand, as does its labour power as its children grow and do more work. Although the marriage of its daughters usually represents a loss of domestic labour to the household, in most of the cases I encountered the sons continued to work under the direction of their father until he was very old. Whether or not this will become the typical pastoral cycle in the future is difficult to judge, because at present there are still a number of consequences of the way in which commune assets were divided which tend to favour the late division of

herds and pasture allocation. In the mid-1980s it was the existent household heads that were allocated grazing rights, and some gained ownership of grass-cutting machinery, livestock enclosures, and other capital assets. There is a strong incentive, then, for married sons to continue to work for their father and gain the use of these pastures, machines, and facilities.

It is interesting to compare the pre-revolutionary and post-collective pastoral domestic economies. A useful source for a detailed description of the pastoral household economy in pre-revolutionary Mongolia is W. Karamisheff who gives a detailed household budget for a 'typical' Mongolian pastoral household in the late nineteenth century, based upon studies done by two Russian Mongolists, Maiski and Morozoff. Although it is based primarily on data from Outer Mongolia, it provides some guide as to the income and outgoings of herding families. By averaging the budgets of several households I stayed with in 1988, I estimated a comparable typical annual income and expenditure for a middle-income pastoral family at that time. It is a conscious model, based on informants' own estimates of their income and expenditure, and not an attempt to be statistically representative. But it is interesting to compare, albeit in a very sketchy way, the post-collective pastoral household with the 'traditional' pre-revolutionary one.

The unit for ownership of livestock, and often for residence also, has generally remained the stem family. Although there are great variations, in the late 1980s this usually included a married couple, all their unmarried and one of their married children with his or her marriage partner, and their grandchildren if they were old enough to have any. In view of this the following figures are estimated for a family of four adults and three children living in two *ger*s, such as one would find in the common arrangement of an old couple living in one *ger*, and one of their children (often the youngest son) living in the second *ger* with his or her spouse and three children. The model family owns 200 small animals (150 sheep and 50 goats), 20 cattle, and 10 horses. In this respect they are slightly better off than the average for Inner Mongolian pastoralists, which was about 30 animals per head of population at that time. It should be stressed that the values given are only a rough guide; there is a great deal of variation between families and households in economic arrangements as in most things.

It should also be stressed that households are not impermeable economic units, but are linked in social networks that often provide mutual help. Services and goods are available through networks of those linked by the bonds of kinship, friendship, or in some cases, residential proximity. For these reasons, among others, it becomes very problematic to treat households as if they were discrete units for production and consumption. A formal unit, such as a household, in fact relies upon the services of the many people in its network, and the figures should be viewed with this in mind. The budget itself is found in the Appendix, but I provide a summary here.

TABLE 1. *Pastoral household budget in 1988: income*

	Income (yuan)	% of total income
Wool	2,475	46.5
Livestock	2,450	46.0
Hides	400	7.5
TOTAL	5,325	

The data in Table 1 indicate a per capita income of about 760 yuan a year,[22] which, given inflation and rising prices for animal products, seems in line with the official average figure for pastoral households of 650 yuan in 1985.[23] In reality there was a great deal of variation in the income generated by different households, even if they had the same crude number of animals. The price given for animal products and the productivity of different breeds varied widely.[24] Close to Shilingol a sheep could be sold for as much as 150 yuan in 1988, whilst in more remote regions a large sheep would cost about 90 yuan. I have tried to average out these regional variations, and assumed the family could not sell milk. Needless to say a family with the same numbers of livestock that were living near a city, keeping special breeds, or selling some other product, would have had a considerably higher income than that given in Table 1. If they were able to sell milk this model family could, for instance, make an additional 1,000 yuan a year or so. However, many herding families, probably the majority, had lower incomes than this typical one. This model household has slightly more animals than the average (230 rather than 210) and no account has been taken of natural disasters that periodically affect many herdsmen and lead to the death of livestock.

This family eats about 20 small animals a year, or the equivalent (one mature cow provides as much meat as about ten sheep or goats). They also give sheep or goats for the clan *oboo* ceremony, and sell about 15 small animals and 1 cow each year. This family eats or sells about 36 small animals and 1 large animal a year, and the rate of commercialization and consumption added together comes to 16 per cent, which is in line with government statistics as normal for the communal herds during the People's Commune period. At this time about as many animals were sold as were eaten, and government figures suggest that since privatization herdsmen have been selling more animals. In Shilingol in 1983, for example, the value of sold animals was apparently about twice the value of those eaten.[25] That year probably had a particularly high number of animal sales, and that was why it was chosen by the government to illustrate the success of reforms. Almost all of the herders I knew said that they hoped to accumulate animals and increase the size of their herds, and for this reason tried to sell as few animals as they could while still enjoying a reasonably good standard of living.

[22] This household income is also in line with that recorded by Pasternak and Salaff (1993: 174).

[23] Chang, Yan, and Chang (1987: 57).

[24] Some imported sheep breeds (such as merinos and others sometimes known as 'small-tailed sheep' by herders because they lack the fat-storing tail of the native breed), have a better wool yield than the Mongolian sheep. Although they are less hardy than the native sheep they produce up to 11 *jin* (5.5 kg.) of wool which had a price of up to 5 yuan per *jin* in 1988. This could bring in a yearly income of as much as 55 yuan per sheep instead of the 9 yuan or so for an average Mongolian sheep. In the budget calculations, however, I have assumed unimproved Mongolian stock for all the animals as they are the most common breed in Inner Mongolia.

One important change that has occurred since the late 1980s is that the price of wool has declined. Prices had risen quickly from 1985 to 1988 as a result of limited deregulation of the wool market that led to some competition between buyers. In 1989 the administration introduced restrictions so as to channel all sales through the official state purchasing organizations, and prices fell.[26] Friends have told me that in the 1990s the standard of living of pastoralists has declined.

Expenditure

The figures given in Table 2 do not include additional expenses that many pastoral families had to meet. In some districts pastoral households had to repay the nominal price of the privatized livestock that they received. However, in both the *sum*s that I studied the local government had distributed the livestock without even a nominal charge. The model family assumed in the table has access to the necessary machinery to be able to make its own hay for winter feed, and does not have to hire grass-cutting machinery or buy hay. Hiring grass-cutting machinery costs around 100 yuan per day, and it usually takes several days to cut sufficient grass for the family's medium-sized herd. The family also has free access to water, unlike pastoralists in some regions who had to pay for the use of wells that had been privatized or made the subject of charges by local government. In areas where I did encounter charges for the use of wells the cost was about 5 *möngö* [27] per sheep—about 10 yuan for a herd of 200. If they were watered five times a week throughout the summer this would amount to an additional 1,000 yuan or so. The domestic labour power of this model family is also sufficient to herd and shear all their sheep, unlike some families who had to hire additional labour. Some families also invested in preventative veterinary care for their animals, and this cost about 1.5 yuan per animal per year, adding another 345 yuan to the annual expenses.

It is interesting to compare the percentage of total expenditure in the categories shown in Table 2 with the figures for the pre-revolutionary

[25] See Hao Fan (1987: 320).

[26] Longworth and Williamson (1993:101–5).

[27] *Monggy*, classical transliteration. This was the Mongolian term for the *fen*, a hundredth of a yuan.

TABLE 2. *Pastoral household budget in 1988: expenditure*

	Expenditure (yuan)	% of total expenditure
Food and consumer items	1,790.2	35.3
Clothing	1,255	24.7
Household utensils	54	1.1
Saddlery and tools	120.8	2.4
Dwelling and furniture	1,301.4	25.7
Taxes	420	8.3
Transport	130	2.6
TOTAL	5,071.4	

household given by Karamisheff. It is evident that the proportion of income spent upon different categories of expenses has not changed out of all recognition, but is broadly similar. Unfortunately, being primarily interested in the needs of the family, Karamisheff does not include information as to assets or income. Although they have to be adjusted in order to compare them (I have changed my budget, for example, to match Karamisheff's household size),[28] the two budgets do provide us with the opportunity to note some changes and continuities in pastoral Mongolian consumption patterns, as shown in Table 3.

The single biggest discrepancy is the percentage of expenditure in the dwelling and furniture category; my data gives this as more than four times as much as Karamisheff quotes. The biggest component in this category is the price of the felts needed to cover the *ger* frame, which in nineteenth-century Mongolia were not bought but were often made by the families themselves.[29] The change to buying felt probably occurred earlier in Inner than in Outer Mongolia (where they are sometimes still home-produced). Vreeland notes that Chahar Mongolians in the early twentieth century were buying felt rather than making it themselves, because of the proximity of local Chinese labourers from whom such produce could be bought.[30]

The other differences between the patterns of consumption are readily understood. More grain is eaten by the modern Inner Mongolian family,

[28] Karamisheff (1925: 264–74) did not record exactly the same sort of information as I did. For a comparison of the two budgets certain adjustments were necessary. First Karamisheff's expenditure was calculated for a single Mongolian household living in one *ger* rather than the family unit living in two. Secondly, he included the monetary value of all the products made and consumed by the household itself, whilst I have included only items that were brought for cash by the family. Karamisheff also leaves out information regarding the relative wealth of the sample family, and he does not state how many people live in the *ger* he describes, although we can guess from the breakdown of clothing that there are two adults and two children. Modern Inner Mongolian pastoral families are often larger than this, so in order to keep the unit of comparison the same—the household—I have used a couple with three children in a readjusted budget worked out so as better to compare the modern Inner Mongolian pastoral budget with that of the 19th-cent. Outer Mongolian one.

[29] Karamisheff (1925: 275).

[30] Vreeland (1962: 147).

TABLE 3. *Comparison of expenditure in 1925 and 1988*

	Annual cost (yuan)	Notes 1988 (prices in yuan)	% of total expenditure	% of expenditure, 1925
Food and consumer goods	2,728	Bought product = 1,018; 15 sheep eaten = 1,350; Milk consumed (900 *jin*) = 360	58.3	69.3
Clothing	630	For 2 adults and 3 children	13.5	11.5
Dwelling and household furniture	651	For 1 *ger*	13.9	3.1
Household utensils and fuel	431	Household utensils (1 *ger*) = 28 1,500 *jin* fuel = 15	0.9	3.8
Saddlery and tools	121		2.6	3.6
Taxes	420		9.0	6.6
Religious observances	90	One sheep given for the *oboo* ceremony.	1.9	2.1
TOTAL	4,683			

which reflects the availability of inexpensive grain. Much more of the expenditure on food in Karamisheff's budget was accounted for by commodities that the family produced itself, which amounted to three times the value of the food that was bought. I estimate the value of food that the modern Inner Mongolian pastoral family produced itself is less than twice the value of bought food. The much lower expenditure on household utensils is also interesting. It may be that this reflects a decrease in the relative cost of such goods, now that factory-made products of this sort are readily available. Apart from the categories mentioned above, however, the general balance of expenditure remains similar, and it is interesting that the proportion devoted to religious observances is almost the same. As the minimum per capita income set by the government is only 150 yuan a year and as working for richer herders at that time would provide a wage of about 540 yuan a year per worker, it is evident that the poor cannot afford all the things itemized in the budget. They manage by simply not replacing things as often and consuming less than the well-to-do families. They may rely upon other families for transport, borrowing carts and oxen, and often receive gifts and hand-me-downs from family and friends.

7

Kinship, Clans, and History

Notions of kinship, and the obligations they imply, provide basic models for close social relations, both within the household, and beyond it. Long-established networks are the basis of most social interaction beyond the household, and are relied upon to provide support and assistance in times of need. The idiom of kinship may be used to describe the members of an individual's network. The term *ah düü* means 'brothers and sisters' but can be applied to friends as well as relations (*hamaatan*). Kinship is traced bilaterally and networks usually include patrilateral, matrilateral, and affinal kin. The closest bonds are generally found between members of a minimal lineage of around three generations in depth (particularly if they live near each other). Beyond this, however, the incidence and importance of clans and lineages differs between different Mongolian groups. Clans are prominent in Hulun Buir among the Barga and Buryat groups, in Hinggan, Jirem, and Juu Ud leagues, among the Mongoljin and Tümed Mongolians of Liaoning, the Chahar and the more western Mongol groups—the Tümed, Ordos, Bayan Nuur, and Alasha Mongolians. In contrast, the Shilingol Mongolians, including the Sünid, Üjümchin, and Abaga (like most of the Halh Mongolians of 'Outer' Mongolia) recognize the noble Borjigin clan, but apart from this have relatively little by way of widely extended kinship structures.[1] The most widely used Mongolian term for the clan is *obug*[2] but in Hulun Buir clans are known by the Manchu term *hala*, and in some areas they were traditionally known as *yasan*[3] (which means bone), or *aimag* (a word that can be used used to mean tribe, but is mainly used to mean a large administrative district).

The significance of clans was very different in Bayan Gol and Chagaan *sum*s. Like most Shilingol Mongolians, the Abaga are almost completely without clans except for the Borjigid nobility, while the Barga areas of Hulun Buir have a large number of exogamous, patrilineal clans (*hala*). Whilst the Borjigid are found in most regions of Inner Mongolia, the Buryat, Barga, and Oirad Mongolians do not have a native Borjigid nobility, although in the case of the Barga regions some can be found who have moved in from other regions. The contrast between Shilingol and Barga Mongolians, then, is that whilst the Barga have clans but almost no Borjigid nobles, Shilingol has a Borjigid nobility but almost no other clans.

[1] Vreeland (1962: 57).

[2] *Ovog*, Cyrillic transliteration. In the text I give the term as transliterated from the classical script, as in this case it is closer to the Inner Mongolian pronunciation.

[3] *Jasun*, classical transliteration.

In general Mongolian kinship systems trace patrilineal descent, and have exogamous kinship units of a few generations in depth. There has been some discussion as to how to classify the Mongolian kinship terminology system. Szynkiewicz argues that in the past all Mongolian kinship terminology was of the Omaha type, and that among the Halh this has been broken down in the last century as a result of 'the bilateralization tendency, which is characteristic of a society organized in territorial and goal-oriented groups'.[4] Modern Barga kinship terminology broadly matches that of the Buryat, and of the Halh as described by Vreeland,[5] in that it can be classified as belonging to the Omaha type.[6] Among Inner Mongolians, as among the Halh, there is a tendency to refer to all kin of the same generation by the terms *ah* for older males (meaning elder brother in its more restricted sense), *egch* for older females, and *düü* (younger sibling) for younger kin,[7] regardless of their detailed relationship to ego. This is used by Szynkiewicz as evidence to support his historical thesis that the Omaha terminology system is breaking down so as to resemble 'the lineal (English) type as generation +1 is concerned and generational type for terminology in generation 0'.[8] These words are also terms of address, and can also be used between non-kin as marks of respect and familiarity.

The material conditions of the herding communities of Chagaan *sum*, Shilingol, and Bayan Gol *sum*, Hulun Buir were very similar. Both were relatively wealthy pastoral regions under a local administration composed chiefly of Mongolians. It raises the question as to why non-noble clans were important institutions among the Barga, but not in Shilingol. One Mongolian informant attributed the absence of clans in some regions to those areas being peopled, historically, by one clan which then gave its name to the region. The Sünid or Üjümchin, for instance, were originally a clan and in the absence of other clans to distinguish themselves from, and to exchange marriage partners with, the clan was forgotten except as a placename. This explanation is not a very convincing one. First, it is speculative and without any historical context—having something of the nature of a 'just so' story. Secondly it is difficult to envisage a situation in which the area was either completely uninhabited so that the only clan to enter the area could monopolize it, or that one exogamous clan could naturally grow to populate an area completely. It

[4] Szynkiewicz (1978: 25).

[5] Vreeland (1962: 58–9).

[6] Krader classifies Mongol–Turkic kinship terminology into 3 groups: (1) Classical Mongol, Ordos, and Chahar; (2) Buryat and Halh; and (3) Kalmyk, Kazakh, Uzbek, and Kirghiz. Krader states that in the first group there are terms for patri-parallel cousins, and for matri-parallel cousins, but no terms for patri-cross cousins, and the only terms for matri-cross cousins are those for maternal kin generally. The second group, he writes, has terms for patri-cousins and matri-cousins, but cross and parallel cousins are not differentiated. In fact it appears that Krader is mistaken, Vreeland's (1962: 58–9) work on the Halh and Humphrey's (1983: 396–7) work on the Buryat show that both groups have separate terms for all four types of cousin and are of the Omaha type.

[7] *Ax-a*, *egeci*, and *degyy*, classical transliteration.

[8] Szynkiewicz (1978: 24).

also seems unlikely that no other clans would enter the area, or that those that did would be subsumed into the native clan so quickly that the original kinship identity was lost.

It is generally held that Mongolian kinship systems, in particular clans or *obug*, had deteriorated from some much more elaborated state, so that by the twentieth century they were all but forgotten in many parts of Mongolia. Vreeland, in his study of Halh Mongolian society, notes that, 'By 1920 most persons had difficulty in tracing their patrilineal connections in their own generation beyond 1st and 2nd cousins.'[9] The notable exception were the members of the Borjigid. That such noble families remembered and stressed clan membership is unsurprising—they had every interest in retaining their claims to membership of the ruling aristocracy. As such, Borjigid identity can be seen to be an aspect of the socio-political and status structures of the pre-revolutionary state. The question remains as to why other clans were not significant in much of Mongolia in the twentieth century, and whether or not they had been more important before this time.

Many commentators have noted the effect that the formation of the thirteenth-century Mongol state had on kinship structures. Bacon describes the effect of the Chinggisid conquests on Mongolian kinship as follows: 'Among the medieval Mongols the period of imperial conquest resulted in the shuffling of traditional territorial kin groups. In the ensuing period there was a tendency for the descendants of Chinggis Khan's family to assume the status of hereditary nobility, the members of which ruled over the tribesmen in a feudal relationship of lord and vassal.'[10] Although the formation of the Chinggisid state certainly was of crucial importance in shaping Mongolian kinship systems, the picture that Bacon paints is more than a little misleading. She assumes that the former society was composed of territorial kin groups, and implies that a hereditary nobility was the result of a tendency *initiated* by the Chinggisid conquests. This approach was widely followed in descriptions of Mongolian history and kinship.[11]

It is clear, however, from the thirteenth-century account *The Secret History of the Mongols* that the commoner—nobility distinction long predated Chinggis Khan's rise to power (the terms used were *chagaan yas*, 'white bone', for nobles and *har yas*, 'black bone', for commoners).[12] Documented traditions of aristocracy and hereditary overlordship in the Mongolian region stretch back as far as the Hsiung-nu empire of the second century BC.[13]

[9] Vreeland (1962: 57). In Mongolia the clan name or surname (*ovogiin ner*) is generally the personal name of an individual's father (or mother in his absence), and has been since at least 1925 (see Bulag 1998: 121), although it might predate this.

[10] Bacon (1958: 81).

[11] See e.g. Jagchid and Hyer (1979: 263–5).

[12] *Cagan jasu* and *xar-a jasu*, classical transliteration.

[13] See Barfield (1981). The Hsien-pi, who replaced the Hsiung-nu around AD 100, were also ruled by an aristocracy; see Krader (1979: 227). The *Secret History* describes Chinggis Khan's ancestry in such a way as to include many with titles (often derived from both the Liao dynasty and the Orkhon-Turkish empire), even some of the most distant matrilateral ancestors are said to be lords of large territories (see Cleaves 1982: 2, Onon 1990: 3–11). Time is taken to legitimate Chinggis Khan's ancestry as that of rulers (Alan Goa declares that her sons will become lords of all, and contrasts them with the commoners, see Onon 1990: 5, Cleaves 1982: 4). It is emphasized that the ancestor of Chinggis's rival (Jamuqa) was a captive woman who had already become pregnant by an unknown foreigner (Cleaves 1982: 8).

Chinggis Khan's great-grandfather was a famous Khan (Kabul Khan) and the title eventually passed to his son (Kutula Khan), described as the 'Lord of the Nation'.[14] It is clear that both the institution of khanship and the existence of noble lineages predated Chinggis Khan's conquests, both immediately and in terms of ancient history.[15]

A complementary assumption has often been made that in the period before the Chinggisid conquests a segmentary kinship system had existed. Szynkiewicz has shown that the *lack* of a segmentary lineage structure dates back at least to the fourteenth century. He states that 'towards the end of the Yuan dynasty . . . the lineage organisation, composed of a network of maximal lineages going back to the forefather of the clan and subdivided into segments, can be assumed to have ceased to exist. The few surviving maximal lineages may have comprised the aristocracy.'[16] Szynkiewicz still implies, however, that a segmentary kinship system had *once* existed, and that it included most Mongolians, not just the aristocracy.

This conception of early Mongolian society seems to have been a result of the influence of social anthropological models developed to describe African pastoralists, in particular Evans-Pritchard's classic study of the Nuer, published in 1940. As Asad notes, since that time there has been a widespread assumption that pastoral societies tend to have segmentary lineage systems, which help maintain their equality.[17] The application of this model conformed with the inclinations of European scholars to conceive of nomads as 'free' and relatively egalitarian. Lattimore notes this tendency in accounts of Mongolia. '[By the second half of the nineteenth century] few travellers were interested in deducing from the comparison between poor people and rich herds that the "free" life of the nomad was restricted even in freedom of movement . . .'[18] Lattimore, however, remained sufficiently influenced by

[14] *Ulus-un ejen (ezen)*: this must be the first recorded use of the term *ezen* (Cleaves 1982: 11; Onon 1990: 11). Although both Onon and Cleaves translate *ulus* as 'nation' at this point (which is the accepted term) elsewhere they choose to translate it as 'people'—e.g. when Ong Khan tells Chinggis that he will reunite his scattered *ulus* (Pelliot 1949: s. 104), and this helped give an impression of egalitarian and kin-based social organization. Morgan (1986: 95) translates the later use of the term *ulus* as 'patrimony', which is a useful term and helps clarify Ong Khan's offer to reunite Chinggis Khan's *ulus*.

[15] Indeed one of the very earliest ancestors mentioned, Batachi, seems to have the title of Khan (*qan*), but such was the impulse to downplay aristocracy that Cleaves (1982: 1) made the title part of the name—Batachiqan. In the actual text the term *qan* appears, however, in the same way as it does for those who clearly *were* khans, such as Ong Khan. See Pelliot (1949: 5, 49). Onon dates Batarci Khan as living around AD 790.

[16] Szynkiewicz (1977: 31).

[17] Asad (1979: 421).

[18] Lattimore (1962*b*: 96).

longstanding European notions of the egalitarian nomad to displace the existence of nomadic freedom and equality into the pre-Chinggisid period for which there are almost no historical records.[19] As much of the subsequent historical record shows Mongolian society to have been dominated by hierarchical political structures, rather than egalitarian kinship systems, these characteristics were explained away as 'distortions' of the original nomadic society, caused by contact with sedentary states.[20]

The reasoning behind such assumptions was influenced by an environmentally deterministic supposition that pastoral nomadic societies were constrained by the nature of their mobile economy. Some, pastoral specialists, such as Dahl,[21] argued that the ecological constraints of pastoralism tend to prevent the accumulation of wealth necessary for stratification. Others, such as Burnham, saw the spatial mobility of the pastoral nomad as also being a political mechanism that inhibited centralization and class stratification.[22] Since it was assumed that pastoral nomads did not form highly stratified societies without external influence, and as the dominant model of acephalous pastoral political systems was that of segmentary opposition, it was natural to picture pre-Chinggisid Mongolian society in this mould, and to interpret the available information (principally *The Secret History of the Mongols*) in this light. This approach quickly became the received wisdom on the subject. Barfield, for example, writes, 'At the time of Temujin's [Chinggis Khan's] birth the steppe was in anarchy. Segmentary opposition was the basic form of political organisation: opposing tribes or clans would unite against a common foe, only to separate and continue fighting one another when the common enemy was defeated.'[23]

Evidence was found to support this approach: *The Secret History of the Mongols* includes some genealogical data, and some of the named kin-groups traced descent from common ancestors. However, on closer inspection these genealogies are not particularly 'segmentary'. (Most of the named kin-groups were considered to be descended from a number of brothers, thus providing little of the classical structure of segmentary kinship by which some descent-groups are strategically located closer to some lineages and more distant from

[19] Ratchnevsky (1991: 12), who makes much use of Persian sources, has a similar tendency. Knowing that the *Secret History* describes a clearly stratified society he pushes the mythic, nomadic, kin-based society back to to the turmoil before Chinggis is born. He writes 'the kinship group lost its homogeneous character'. This is a strange comment to make as Ratchnevsky uses Persian sources to show that both Kutula and Ambagai ruled steppe empires, but presumably he conceives of these empires as consisting of homogeneous kin groups, much as Bacon must have conceived of Chinggis's early empire.

[20] Jagchid and Hyer (1979: 261) provide an example of this approach when they suggest that the 'idea of a higher level of integration, a larger governing unit, arose from contact with neighbours of the Mongols, who already had more highly developed nation-states'. (It is not clear if these neighbours are meant to include other pastoral peoples—such as the Naiman—or not, but it follows the trend of portraying pastoral nomadic society as innately tending to be ascephalous.)

[21] Dahl (1979: 261–80). [22] Burnham (1979: 349–60). [23] Barfield (1989: 189).

others.)[24] Much more importantly, however, there is no reason to suppose that the society was composed of territorial kin-groups that acted according to the particular processes of fission and fusion described by Evans-Pritchard's model of segmentary opposition. For example, we have little evidence of political alliances being consistently formed on the basis of genealogical distance, indeed those recorded in *The Secret History of the Mongols* suggest shifting pragmatic alliances between powerful leaders with little or no respect for genealogical proximity, the most bitter warfare often being between close aristocratic relatives.[25]

In fact there is no direct evidence to suggest that pre-Chinggisid Mongolian society was at all egalitarian, or had a segmentary kinship system that encompassed most of the members of the society.[26] If we try to rid ourselves of such preconceptions and approach the *Secret History* as a historical source rather than a mythic account, we see that at the time of Chinggis Khan's birth there was a large number of named lineages or clans with which groups of peoples were identified.[27] However, it seems that the ruled populations were almost certainly not members of such lineages. It is more likely that these names referred only to the noble ruling families, and were used to designate the political structures headed by those aristocratic lineages.

The people known as the Jürkin, for instance, were one of several named groups living in Mongolia at the time. It could easily be assumed that they formed a homogeneous kin-based 'tribe' composed of clansmen. In fact it is clear from section 139 of the *Secret History* that the political unit had originally been formed by a king (Kabul Khan). The term 'Jürkin' more properly referred to the ruling lineages only. 'Chinggis Qahan made such arrogant people submit [to him] and he destroyed the Jürkin clan. Chinggis Qahan made their people, and the tribes [they ruled], his own people.'[28] On the vassals or subjects of the Jürkin we have almost no information, but they were

[24] See Onon (1990: 174–6).

[25] For example, to battle with the forces of a relative (Jamuqa) whose army included forces led by a named kin group closely related to him (the Tayyichi'ut), Chinggis Khan allied himself with the khan of the Kereid who, like most of the other important named groups of the region (the Tatar, Merkit, and Naiman) had no genealogical connection with the Borjigid at all. A generation earlier the khan of the Kereid had recruited the military support of Chinggis Khan's father against his own family. (See Onon 1990: 65). In both cases the politically expedient relationship of *anda* (sworn brotherhood) was used without reference to genealogical distance.

[26] In the *Secret History* it is recorded that a distant ancestor of Chinggis, called Bodonchar (from whom the Borjigid were descended) was surprised to encounter a group of people without lords. He and his brothers promptly plundered them, 'and so came unto herd and food, unto people and servant' (Cleaves 1982: 8). This ancestor was placed eight generations before Chinggis Khan in the *Secret History*, and although genealogical time should not be equated with chronological time this would seem to indicate that the event was considered to have been a very long time in the past.

[27] Some scholars describe these groups as clans, although this is misleading, because in many cases the genealogy of these descent groups is mentioned in the *Secret History* and it can be assumed that these should more properly be called lineages, in that genealogical connections were traced.

[28] Onon (1990: 56); Cleaves (1982: 66–7).

not destroyed when Chinggis liquidated the Jürkin clan. It is clear that there were subject peoples ruled by most if not all of the named descent groups. Later in the *Secret History* it is recorded that Chinggis Khan attacked another grouping (closely related to him) called the Tayyichi'ut. The account reads: 'Then Chinggis Qahan plundered the Tayyichi'ut. The people of Tayyichi'ut bones [lineages]—A'uchu-ba'atur, Qoton-orcheng, Qudu'udar and others of the Tayyichi'ut, from their seed to their seed—he killed . . . The people of their nation he brought [with him].'[29] Here again we have an indication that the people of the Tayyichi'ut 'nation' (*ulus*, realm) were certainly *not* members of the Tayyichi'ut lineages. The Tayyichi'ut do not seem to have headed a political and military unit composed of their kinsmen; they were a ruling lineage with a large number of subjects. In general, in the *Secret History*, commoners do not have clan membership assigned to them. Sorqan-shira, for instance, one of the few commoners mentioned in the *Secret History*, is described as being the bondsman or servant of one of the Tayyichi'ut nobles.[30] Sorqan-shira himself was described as being from the Suldus people, but no other hint of his own ancestry is given,[31] and he is quoted as talking of the Tayyichi'ut as if they are unrelated to him.[32]

It may be, then, that even as early as the thirteenth century clan membership was of primary importance to the nobility, and that many commoners did not themselves have extended genealogies or elaborate kinship systems. Whether or not this was the case we cannot assume that clans formed politico-residential units which most steppe dwellers belonged to.[33] Descent and kinship were clearly of key importance to the nobility in legitimizing their claims and authority, but their subject groups were probably not related to them (being 'black bone'), and political and legal rights seem to have been based on socio-political status.[34]

[29] Onon (1990: 63); Cleaves (1982: 76).

[30] In Cleaves' translation (ibid. 160), he uses the term 'bondsman'. Onon (ibid. 123), however, uses the term 'servant', and he explains the word used in the *Secret History*—*tödöge* as being derived from an Orqon Turkish word meaning prisoner of war (see ibid. 61 n. 169).

[31] Ibid. 24. (See also Cleaves (1982: 26.) It is clear, however, that the term entails subordinate or subject status. Other commoners mentioned were Badai and Kishilik, who were elevated by Chinggis himself to the status of freedmen (*darhan*) for their great services. We are told that their lord was Yeke Cheren (whose genealogy was recorded) but nothing of the commoners' descent. (See Cleaves ibid. 11.)

[32] In Onon's translation (pp. 24–5), Sorqan-shira is recorded as saying to Temujin (Chinggis Khan) 'Your kinsmen are approaching'—which suggests they are not his own kinsmen (interestingly, the term translated as 'kinsmen' is *aqa de'ü—(ah düü)* which in modern usage can mean both relatives and friends). He goes on to address the Tayyichi'ut thus: 'You Tayyichi'ut nobles have lost a whole man . . .' Cleaves (1982: 73) later mistakes the word *tödöge* as a group name, when Onon (1990: 61) shows it to mean servant or bondsman.

[33] This is implied e.g. by Jagchid and Hyer (1979: 245–9).

[34] The difference in social status between aristocrat and subject is clear. The *Secret History* records the lament of one Chilger, a commoner who because he lived with Temujin's wife after she was captured by the Merkid, was racked with guilt for touching a noblewoman. He is recorded as saying, 'I, Chilger . . . touched the Lady, the qatun . . . Ignoble and bad Chilger, his own black [i.e. common] head will receive [a blow]' (Onon 1990: 40; Cleaves 1982: 45).

It seems more logical to assume that descent and marriage were the principal cultural systems through which noble groups identified themselves and their relationship to each other. Lineage membership and marriage alliances formed the political map, and kinship (including fictive kinship) was the idiom through which strategic positions were expressed.[35] Kinship expressed a political landscape and described prominent ruling families and the relationship between them. The way that kinship was generally used to describe relationships between broadly equal political groups has helped support the model of thirteenth-century Mongol society as a clan-based, homogeneous, fairly egalitarian one, but in fact it probably only described the relations between ruling groups. The long genealogy at the beginning of the *Secret History* was important in establishing the credentials of Chinggis Khan and other noble families like his, but we have no idea as to the significance of genealogy for their subjects.

The Chinggisid conquests certainly did have important effects on the kinship systems of the steppe, however, in that they changed the political map completely. By 1206, having subdued the many other noble houses, and making their subjects his own, Chinggis Khan founded a new polity. The people of this domain became known by the name of the wider ethnic group to which the Borjigid belonged—the Mongols. Chinggis Khan's own lineage (the Kiyad Borjigin) became pre-eminent. Some of the other older aristocratic lineages had been virtually destroyed by Chinggis (such as the Tayyichi'ut and much of the Tartar élite), others were supplanted as aristocrats and their subjects allocated to others (such as the Jürkin). Still others intermarried with members of the new Borjigid élite.[36] Over the next century Chinggis Khan's descendants (as well as conquering much of Eurasia), secured their position as Mongolia's ruling aristocracy. This made other descent identities increasingly irrelevant, so that the old multiplicity of noble groups was gradually reduced as they were replaced by the Borjigid aristocracy.

This theory would provide an explanation as to why groups that became subject to the Borjigid aristocracy are also often characterized by a lack of other clans. Other geographically peripheral Mongolian groups such as the Buryats, Barga, and Oirad have retained clans to the present day. It might be argued that for these groups genealogical descent was still of interest in claiming legitimacy and rights to land use, as Humphrey's analysis of Buryat genealogy implies.[37] The first explanation, then, of why some groups retained clans is that, as they were not part of the Chinggisid state, such groups did not have a single aristocracy—the Borjigid—imposed upon them.

[35] The use of the *anda* (sworn or fictive brotherhood) relationship, for example. Parties to a political alliance would sometimes declare themselves *anda* to highlight a particularly close relationship. Temujin (Chinggis Khan) and his father both had such *anda*.

[36] Some of the Kereid nobility intermarried with the Borjigid, e.g. Chinggis Khan had at least one Kereid wife (Ibaqa, daughter of Jaqa-gambu), as did his son. See Onon (1990: 91).

[37] Humphrey (1979: 258).

This explanation, however, does not account for the existence of clan structures among such groups as the Chahar, who certainly were part of the Chinggisid state and the Yuan dynasty. It also assumes that clans are somehow 'natural' to those Mongol regions beyond the reach of the Borjigid or their aristocratic predecessors. A more compelling argument, such as that implied by Szynkiewicz, looks to the Manchu period for an explanation.

Szynkiewicz notes that the Manchus who ruled Mongolia from the seventeenth to the twentieth century attempted to impose a system of lineages upon their Mongolian subjects, using any convenient terms that could be made to stand as clan names.

> Nurqachi [the founder of the Manchu state] based his organization on kinship groups in the conquered areas . . . Following established practice, the Manchu began with registering the kinship groups in the conquered areas. They succeeded in putting on record 233 groups of the *obug* type in southern Mongolia (Lebedeva 1958), a very modest number in comparison with the potential number of lineages in the entire society. . . . Quite a few of them were presumably somewhat artificial constructs put on the list—as argued by Mergen Gegen.[38]

Szynkiewicz goes on to note that the Manchu refrained from attempting to impose this kinship structure on the Halh following their submission in the seventeenth century. The Daur and Horchin Mongol groups, which were incorporated into the Manchu state in the seventeenth century, either retained or developed clans as a consequence of the new political system. This was because the Manchu used kinship in a politically different way from the Chinggisids. Rather than imposing an aristocracy who were all members of the same clan, the Manchu banner system institutionalized the existing clan units by making them part of the banner administration. Indeed, in the case of the Daur it seems likely that their clans (*hala*) were created at the time of their incorporation into the Manchu administration. When the Daur moved from the Amur to the Nonni River in the seventeenth century the groups that later became *hala* were named after rivers, and were probably territorial groupings at that time.[39]

This seems of crucial importance in understanding the present differences we find in the extended kinship systems of Mongol groups. Generally it is the case that groups that were incorporated into the Manchu state relatively early, such as the Horchin, Daur, and Chahar have generally retained clans, whilst other Borjigid-ruled Mongol groups have not—most notably the Halh Mongolians of Outer Mongolia who were never ruled by the Manchu directly, but only through their own nobility under Manchu governors. This explanation, however, does not account for the Buryat, most of whom were not subjects of the Manchu, but who retained clans. First, as this group never had a Borjigid aristocracy imposed upon them they could be expected to have

[38] Szynkiewicz (1977: 32). [39] Humphrey, personal communication, 1990.

a stronger and more widespread clan system than many other Mongol groups. It is also possible that the Russian system of indirect rule which instituted clans (*rod* in Russian) as administrative units[40] actually promoted and extended their importance. Groups that came to join the Buryats from northern Mongolia might then have found it in their interests to develop genealogies in order to reinforce their legitimacy in the local political framework.

Another possible explanation is a religious one. Many of the Mongolian groups that have retained clans to this day also tend to be ones in which Buddhism was introduced relatively late, and in which folk religious practices remain strong.[41] Bulag (1998: 123) argues that Karmic ideology is antithetical to the genealogical principle, and there are other plausible mechanisms that might link the spread of Buddhism to the decline of clans. If Lévi-Strauss was correct in asserting that exogamy provides the 'fundamental and immutable rule ensuring the existence of the group as a group',[42] then a breakdown in an exogamous marriage system would constitute good grounds for the decline of the groups that exchanged women. It does seem logical that the spread of monastic Buddhism would have important consequences for any kinship system. The lamas were in theory forbidden to marry. This did not, however, prevent many of them from living with a woman and having families. Pozdneyev (writing in the nineteenth century) noted that 'The lama who takes a wife pays no bride-price, and goes through no religious ceremony, but simply conveys his loved one to his yurt and makes her his housewife. It is true that he does not pass his name on to his children, and in the official *khoshuun* [banner] lists his children are mentioned by their mother's name.'[43] Pozdneyev estimated the number of lamas (meaning all those who have taken up the clerical profession and vows) to have been over half the entire Halh male population.[44] Even if Pozdneyev is exaggerating, it is clear that a great number, possibly even the majority, of marriages did not constitute an exchange of women between exogamous descent groups. Not only was bride-price (a central part of the exchange process between kin groups) not given in such cases, but as Pozdneyev states the children of such unions were in an ambiguous kinship position; their mother had not formally joined their father's kin group, and in a nominally patrilineal society the fact that they took their mother's name implies that they were not the product of a formal

[40] Humphrey (1983: 51–3).

[41] It may be that as Buddhism suppressed the shamans and their pre-Buddhist cosmology it also had a negative impact upon the clan structure. After all, the felt idols that were burnt by the lamas in the 16th cent. were called *ongod*—which can be used to mean ancestors. There was a link, then, between the pre-Buddhist religion and the kinship structure, and even today the *oboo* ceremony (a folk-religious practice which probably predates Buddhism in Mongolia) is often carried out by clans where they exist. Studies of Buryat shamanism suggest this link between kinship and religion. Heissig (1980: 8–9) considers the connection to be so fundamental that he considers pre-Buddhist Mongolian 'shamanism' to be a development of ancestor-worship.

[42] Lévi-Strauss (1969: 481). [43] Pozdneyev (1978: 245). [44] Ibid. 169.

marriage at all. It is conceivable, then, that over time the clans were eroded by this change in marriage practice. However, as the main mechanism for the decline, this explanation is unconvincing. The Tümed, for example, were some of the earliest converts to Buddhism and they do have some clans. Even the Buryat and the Barga, who retain strong clan systems, had been introduced to Buddhism by the eighteenth century.

One or several of these mechanisms could have contributed to the absence or decline of large descent groups among Mongol commoners. However, the fact that in the Barga regions clans are known by the Manchu word *hala* (pronounced hal), rather than the Mongol word *obug*, again suggests that they may well have been a product of the Manchu administration of the region.[45]

The Barga of Hulun Buir

Groups known as Barga moved from the north of what is now Mongolia into the western part of Hulun Buir in the eighteenth century, and the Manchu rulers allowed them to settle in the area in return for swearing fealty and paying tribute. Lattimore quoting Binsteed[46] dates the arrival of the first group of Barga at 1732. This group were given the area that became known as the Old Barga banner—Huuchin Barga *hoshuu*.[47] The second wave of immigrants came in 1735, according to Lattimore, and were settled in the New Barga banner, and this was later split into left and right banners, Shine Barga Jüün *hoshuu* and Shine Barga Baruun *hoshuu*.[48] The Barga historian Tubshinnima of the Galjud dates the New Barga arrival one year earlier (1734).[49] The Old Barga banner has a significant Evenke population and locals say that, as a result, there was a weaker Lamaist influence than in New Barga.

The Barga clans are known by the Manchu word *hala* and this adds weight to the argument that Manchu administration was instrumental in the promotion of the clan among the Barga, if not among other Mongolian groups. The *hala* is exogamous, and today its name can be used by members in a way that is similar to a surname although it is generally placed before the personal name. According to folk tradition the Barga and Buryat are the descendants of Barga (also written Bargo) Baatar Daiching Noyan. He had three sons: Ylidei, Burijad, and Horidai Mergen. Tubshinnima of the Galjud lists eleven sons of Horidai Mergen. He considers them to be the founding ancestors of the Barga clans that bear their name.[50] They are written Galzud Xovasai,

[45] In the Qing period Manchu was the official language, and the (Barga Mongol) officials used it even among themselves, when speaking in an official capacity. See Hyer and Jagchid (1983: 126).

[46] Lattimore (1934: 158–60).

[47] *Xagurcin Barga Xosigu*, classical transliteration.

[48] *Sin-e Barga Zegyn Xosigu*, and *Sin-e Barga Baragun Xosigu*, classical transliteration.

[49] Tubshinnima (1985: 91).

[50] Ibid. 9. Genealogies vary and Tubshinnima (ibid. 11) also gives a slightly different listing with ten clans (Xargan-a is missing), in which Xovasai is spelt Xovachai, and Xoshuud replaced with Gushid. However, Ölzii (1999: 8–9) also lists all eleven.He is writing in Cyrillic, however, and gives slightly different spellings—the other two sons of Barga Baatar, for example, are given as Iliüdei and Buriadai.

Kobdegyd, Xoshud, Sharaid, Xargan-a, Xodai, Bodunggud, Xalbin, Chaganggud, Batonai.[51] Tubshinnima attempts to date these possibly mythical characters as living before the twelfth century by drawing on the mention of Alan Goa[52] in the *Secret History*. It is possible that this is not true in the historical sense (considering the difference between genealogical and chronological time and the flexibility of genealogies the world over), but it represents the tendency to link existing kinship structures with important historical or mythical figures and to establish their extreme antiquity. The *Secret History* does state that Alan Goa's mother was the daughter of the lord of a group and territory known by the term Bargujin, which de Rachewiltz identifies as the lowland region between the Selenga and Bargujin rivers.[53]

Barga tradition considers Barga Baatar also to be the ancestor of the Buryat Mongolians. A comparison of Barga genealogy with the Hori Buryat ones given by Sum'yabaatar shows so many names that are common to both that it is clear that the schemes are strongly related.[54] It seems, then, that the Barga and Hori Buryat clans are derived from a common source, or have been interrelated for a long time. Two groups of peoples, the Buryat and Bargun, are listed next to each other in the *Secret History* as among the 'People of the Forest' subdued by Jochi, Chinggis Khan's son. It seems quite likely that these were predecessors of the modern Buryat and Barga Mongolians, at least as far as the names are concerned.[55] This is in line with Mikhailov's analysis, and he describes a series of later links between the Hori Buryat and the Barga.

> As a result of the Mongol victories and internal wars a significant part of the Barguts ended up in Eastern Mongolia, where they formed the Bargu-Buryat people . . . At the beginning of the 16th century, the Khoris, under one of the Tümed khans, were given over to the Beile (lord) of the Barguts as dowry-servants of the khan's daughter, who had married the son of the Beile.[56]

[51] These are transliterations of the terms in classical script.

[52] A (possibly mythical) ancestress of Chinggis Khan.

[53] See Cleaves (1982: 2); Onon (1990: 8).

[54] Sum'yabaatar (1966: 15–17) lists thirteen sons of Barga Baatar, from three different wives. This list includes the first eight of the sons (and founders of clans) that are listed by the Barga historian Tubshinnima. In the appendix (p. 307) Sum'yabaatar includes another Buryat genealogy from a different source, and this list includes eleven sons of Barga Baatar including all but one of those listed by Tubshinnima.

[55] See Cleaves (1982: 173); and Onon (1990: 133). The term Bargun is spelt by Onon as 'Barqun'; however, in his translation Cleaves spells the word with a gamma instead of the letter 'q', which makes the resemblance between the terms greater. This group might be related to territory in the Selenge region referred to in the *Secret History* by the term 'Bargujin'. Cleaves ibid. 44; Onon ibid. 39.

[56] Mikhailov (1989: 91).

This would explain why so many clans are common to both the Hori Buryats and the Barga of Hulun Buir. However, the fact that the Barga and Hori Buryat genealogies are not identical confirms the flexibility of such genealogical schemes, allowing for the incorporation and deletion of certain clans under particular historical circumstances.

In fact there are many more clans of people who consider themselves Barga than the original eleven listed by Tubshinnima. In Bayan Gol I found that there were seven clans not on this list, and informants agreed that there were many other Barga clans in other areas whose names they could not remember. Ölzii (1999: 11–13) has compiled a list of thirty-six 'younger' Barga clans in Shine Barga Left banner in addition to the original eleven, and puts the total number of clans in all three Barga banners as eighty-seven. It is unclear when and how these emerged. Tubshinnima notes another six clans that he believes emerged around 1730 when the Barga moved from an area in the north of present-day Mongolia to Hulun Buir. He does not attempt to link them genealogically with the eleven considered to be the descendants of Horidai Mergen.

Most Barga families today have little or no idea about how the different clans are genealogically related or how many there are in total. Old people considered knowledgeable in traditional matters—such as Damdin—agreed that Barga Baatar was the ancestor of the entire group, but did not claim to know how he was related to clan-founders. The clans within a *sum* form a set of named, theoretically exogamous marriage units which have a recognizable cohesion and most of them meet regularly for *oboo* ceremonies. Between them my informants came up with the following list of clans in the Bayan Gol area, in order of size: Sehirad, Sharnuud, Horchid, Sartüül, Bolinjon, Urianhan, Halbin, Höbdüüd, Galjud, Hargana, Hurlad.[57] The Sehired and Sharnuud clans included well over 100 *ail* (households) each, whilst the smallest (the Hurlad) had 10 or so. The mid-range (from the Horchid to the Halbin) had between 50 and 100 household units. It is apparent that the six largest clans are not mentioned in the list of eleven clan founders.

The clans appear to remain exogamous, even though Lubsandorj—who was a Party member—did claim that today clans did not signify when it came to the choice of marriage partners. Both he and his wife had been born members of the Sharnuud clan. However, he admitted this was uncommon, and older informants said that marriages should not take place between members of the same clan. But then, Luvsandorj was a Party member and opposed a number of other traditional customs which he considered backward and unprogressive.

[57] Here I give a transliteration of the spoken form I encountered, as I assume it would appear in Cyrillic. Ölzii (1999: 12–13) gives Cyrillic versions of some clan names that are sufficiently different from the versions I encountered, for me not to use them (Sahirad, Boloizon, and Galzuud). Classical transliteration is: Sekired, Sharnud, Xorcid, Saratagul, Bolinzon, Urijangxan, Xalbin, Kobdegyd, Galzud, Xaragan-a, Xorlat.

At first glance it would seem that there is evidence for what Lévi-Strauss calls 'restricted exchange', whereby two clans exchange women in marriage. The marriage I attended in Bayan Gol was between Bat-Ochir of the Sehired and Chimedsüren of the Sharnuud. The bride's father and the groom's mother were also of the Sehired clan, whilst their marriage partners were both Sharnuud. Indeed, over and over again I came across married couples who represented instances of intermarriage between these two clans. However, my informants in Bayan Gol denied any norm or formal long-term relationship regarding marriage between the two clans. They explained the frequency of intermarriage in terms of probability. The Sehired and Sharnuud are the largest clans in the *sum*, consequently there is a high chance of marriages between them.[58]

The principle unit for *hala* activity was the *sum*. The clan members of a particular *sum*, for example, organized *oboo* ceremonies and accompanying games. However, the corporate identity of the clan extended beyond the limits of the *sum* to a certain extent. Although there were no clan meetings or institutions that united all the members of a *hala* in the entire banner, there was a mutual recognition of other branches of the same clan. A recently arrived member of the Halbin clan, for example, had been immediately accepted by the other clan members in Bayan Gol and invited to the *oboo* ceremony.

The local Halbin held their annual ceremony (*oboony tahilga*), on the sixteenth day of the sixth lunar month, at the clan *oboo* which is situated a few kilometres to the south-east of the *sum* centre on a small hill.[59] Almost all the members of the clan in the district attended the ceremony, this amounted to between fifty and sixty households. Some Halbin families from other *sum* went to the ceremonies either because it was more convenient for them to get to the Bayan Gol *oboo* than the one in their own *sum* (if it was much further from them for instance), or because their own district did not have enough Halbin families to hold a viable *oboo* ceremony of their own. The limits of this wider clan identity are in effect those of the *hoshuu* (banner), and clan members from outside the banner almost never attended such ceremonies. After the ceremony, traditional games (*naadam*) are held.

In some Barga regions, I was told, clans continue to keep secret lists of all the male members. Every ten years or so there is a meeting of the *hala* to add the names of young men to this list. There are, apparently, no initiation rites, but a short speech must be made for each candidate explaining that he is of

[58] Vreeland (1962: 304), notes that 'Preferential marriage between pairs of sibs, or clans . . . appears to be characteristic of North Manchuria.' This adds to the evidence that the arrangement may have been traditional.

[59] The 16th day of the lunar month has long been considered of special significance in Mongolian culture. The *Secret History* records that as long ago as the 12th cent. this day was termed 'red circle day'.

good character and deserves to be included in the clan record. No one would admit to such lists in Bayan Gol, but as these would be private documents in any case I did not pry.

The only formal leadership position within the clan was the post of organizer for the *oboo* ceremony and *naadam* games. This post was rotated, and filled by a different person each year. The selection process was an informal one, with a rough consensus being reached on a suitable candidate. The primary criterion for the post was said to be honesty, because the large amount of collected money is in their keeping; indeed the term for this post is *nyarab*[60] which means 'treasurer' (and was the term used for the bookkeeper of a monastery). In the months before the ceremony the *nyarab* visits each household of the clan and collects a contribution towards the celebrations and games that accompany the *oboony tahilga*. Each family is asked to contribute what the *nyarab* feels it can afford, so that rich families give more than poor ones. A wealthy household might give a horse or cow, whilst a more usual contribution is a sheep or goat. Poorer families give less, a bottle of Chinese alcohol, or a 10-yuan note for instance. A few of the animals collected in this way are eaten at the celebration (in which case they are kept by the donor until the time of the ceremony and games), and the others are sold to raise cash. A successful event entails a number of expenses. The principal ones are the food and drink for the celebrations that accompany the ceremony, and the prizes given at the games. Although traditionally the 'Three Manly Sports' (*eriin gurban naadam*[61]) are held after the ceremony, one of them—archery—is almost never practised at these small events. The other two—horse-racing and wrestling—remain popular and contests usually take place. The winners must have prizes,[62] and almost every contestant has some small gift, so the total expenses for all these activities is often several thousand yuan.

The *oboo* ceremonies and *naadam* games are not strongly exclusive. Visitors from other clans may attend, but are not generally considered full participants in the event. Very small *hala* are sometimes allowed to hold the celebrations jointly with a larger clan. This is a way in which a clan which would not have enough members to provide the money needed for a worthwhile gathering and games tournament can nevertheless participate in a respectably large celebration and games. However, in this case the smaller clan would hold a separate spiritual ceremony at their nearby clan *oboo* before commencing festivities.

[60] *Nirba*, classical transliteration. [61] *Er-e jin gurban nagadum*, classical transliteration.

[62] Prizes were generally Chinese items bought in towns, such as clocks, transistor radios, and factory-made woollen blankets.

Kinship in Chagaan Sum

In contrast with the prominence of clans among the Barga, Chagaan *sum* is mainly inhabited by Abaga Mongolians,[63] who are without an inclusive system of named lineages or clans, like most of the groups living in Shilingol, and most of the Halh of Mongolia. Kinship, however, is of primary importance for residence, inheritance, economic management, and social organization. In almost every aspect of day-to-day life the practical significance of kin relationships in Chagaan *sum* were virtually identical to those of Bayan Gol. In Chagaan, however, as among most Shilingol Mongolians, genealogies were not usually traced back more than three of four generations.[64] Marriage was generally prohibited between those who could trace common descent, and in practice this category usually included patrilateral and matrilateral kin traced through no more than three or four generations of ancestors.[65] While this was a category for exogamy, this set of people (*hamaatan* or *töröl sadan*)[66] did not meet as a unit or organize joint action. The kinship unit which did have a strong group identity (and a head) was the extended family, the core of which (frequently the virilocal stem family) was often a residential unit.

The history of the administration of Shilingol is different in significant ways from that of the Barga regions. During the Qing dynasty the Barga were considered to be part of the Manchurian administrative structure, and were not included in a Mongolian league.[67] The Barga were not governed by hereditary Mongolian princes, but by a Manchu *amban* (official)[68] who ruled the banners within the Manchu military system. In contrast, Shilingol was a Mongolian league within the Manchu state, and was governed by hereditary princes. According to Lattimore the area was known for having a relatively high level of independence for an Inner Mongolian district.[69] Whilst the Barga had not been subject to the Borjigid aristocracy and were incorporated into the clan-based Manchu administration directly, Shilingol had been governed indirectly by the Manchu through the Borjigid nobility, and like the Halh, had little by way of non-noble clans.

[63] This is the name of the Mongol ethnic group that inhabits this part of Shilingol.

[64] The kinship system of the Chahar as described by Vreeland has some similarities to modern practice in Shilingol. In the early 20th cent. the effective Chahar kinship unit beyond the stem family was composed of all the people 'believing themselves descended from a common ancestor. Where the line of descent could be traced, they were close kin—*oir torel*; if the relationship was based on tradition, they were distant kin—*hol torel*. The latter were distinguished by a common surname.' Vreeland, cited in Bacon (1958: 90). Vreeland's description suggests that in the Chahar case the *oiryn töröl* could be considered a lineage, and *holyn töröl* would be a clan. But in Shilingol and Halh, however, the terms simply mean close and distant kin, respectively, and do not all bear a common name.

[65] In other words, people who are considered to have common grandparents or, in some cases, great-grandparents.

[66] *Xamijatan* and *Toryl sadun*, classical transliteration.

[67] For administrative purposes most of the banners of Mongolia were grouped together to form leagues.

[68] Jagchid and Hyer (1979: 280). [69] Lattimore (1934: 277–8).

Kinship and Residence

There was a long-standing norm of virilocal residence,[70] but this was not a strong prescription, and instances of non-virilocal residence were not thought to be unusual. Residential arrangements were usually explained in terms of convenience. A typical explanation I was given was: 'Manibadar is richer than Rinchen's family and his son is still at school, so Rinchen (the son-in-law) stays with him to herd animals.' In this case Rinchen and his wife expected they would inherit a portion of Manibadar's livestock in the future.

In general residence patterns remained very flexible, and kinship was not the exclusive basis of the wider territorial organization, as some models of nomadic social organization would suppose. Krader's model of the 'kin village', for instance, and his description of Mongol social organization, seems more concerned with some idealized nomadic society than with the actuality. Krader describes 'the close relationship between consanguinity and neighbourhood':

> The nearest neighbour of the pastoralist is his closest kinsman. These kinsmen dwell in close proximity, in small clusters of tents forming a nomadic, consanguineal village, cooperating in the care of herds and in mutual protection; moving their camps in concert; supporting each other before the law; performing religious ceremonies together; . . . The society is organized in a series of concentric circles in such a way that the nearer a neighbour is, the closer the kinship relation to him.[71]

This was clearly not the case in Inner Mongolia, if it ever existed in some Mongolian region. Although consanguinity was extremely important in influencing residential choice, there is nothing like the direct relation between the two that Krader postulates. Chuluunbaatar of Bayan Gol, for instance, did not camp with any of the agnates of his generation (except a senile half brother he helped care for). This was true despite the fact that his brother, Dorj, lived in the same *gachaa* (district). Instead, during summer and autumn Chuluunbaatar lived alongside his affines (his daughter's husband's parents) and not his consanguines. Two of his four sons did not camp with their father, but for much of the year resided with their sister's kin, looking after a section of Chuluunbaatar's herds.

Krader writes 'The nomadic village as a corporate body has the same structure as a clan in miniature,' and he also generalizes that, 'The village of the ordinary nomads contains about ten families.'[72] Both on the detail as to the size of the *ail* and on the general point about kinship Krader's assertions do not hold for pastoral communities. The mobile pastoral *ail* (or *hot-ail*) typically varied from one to six households, and often included matrilateral relatives, affines, and even non-kin. Vreeland notes that among the Chahar in

[70] See Krader (1963: 365); Humphrey (1979: 27).
[71] Krader (1963: 368).
[72] Ibid. 335, 337.

the early twentieth century 'the *törel*[73] was not a residential group, and persons who were of the same *törel* might be widely scattered.' This was also a general pattern outside Inner Mongolia, Vreeland found. 'There appears to have been a general lack of localisation of patrilineally related families in western Outer Mongolia.'[74]

Mobile housing such as the *ger* means that there is a wide range of alternative residence patterns, and families may change them over time. Chuluunbaatar's *ail* demonstrated the flexibility and choice that characterizes residence in pastoral communities. In the summer Chuluunbaatar's *ger* was alongside that of his daughter Narangerel who lived with the parents of her husband Baatar. After the end of the autumn milking season the two stem families would separate and take on a more virilocal form, Narangerel's family staying with her husband's parents from whom they will inherit animals. And in general the yearly cycle would take different sections of a family to different places, as the household head and a varying combination of other family members often stayed in a brick house on the steppe or at the *sum* centre during the winter, whilst younger family members—especially the younger adult men—moved the herds and stayed with them on the various seasonal pastures. Both kin and non-kin could be found herding animals and camping together, for reasons of convenience or herding practice.

Szynkiewicz describes the twentieth-century Halh *hot-ail* as formed primarily by choice, although it often included agnates and affines.[75] An examination of what is known of pre-collective pastoral residential groups shows that at that time residence was also highly flexible and reflected interpersonal relationships and property relations, as well as kinship. Simukov studied pastoral residential groups—*hotons* (*hot-ail*s)[76] in one subdistrict in Arhangai *aimag*, Outer Mongolia. In this region, he noted, the *hot-ail*s tended to be the largest in Mongolia, and this is still noticeable today. He found the average size to be around 4–5 households (much less than in Krader's model) and points out that they were largest in the summer. He wrote 'each separate *hoton* is not a constant organization. Existing today, it may disappear tomorrow . . . the number of *hotons* in one *sum* is constantly changing.' He studied 100 *hotons* and classified them thus: 'the *hotons* with constant composition 45 percent, the *hotons* of mixed character 25 percent, the *hotons* with inconstant composition 30 percent'. He notes that those households who camp

[73] The term (*töröl*) means 'kindred' in this context, I suppose. Today the word is generally used to mean kin or relatives, and not a kin group in the way that Vreeland (1962: 155) tends to use it.
[74] Vreeland ibid. 57. Even among the strongly clan-oriented Buryat, Humphrey's (1983: 340) study suggests that in the past residence was closer to Krader's model than at present, but she notes 'in the Soviet period such agnatic kin groups no longer function as units of residence and production'.
[75] Szynkiewicz (1982: 15–18).
[76] Simukov (1933: 22–3) uses the term *hoton* which today is largely interchangeable with the term *hot-ail*.

together as one *hoton* continuously are those with the highest number of kinship links between the member households.

Simukov avoids describing the *hoton* as a group, instead he talks of 'the *process* of joining-up in *hotons*' (my emphasis).[77] Simukov found that kinship was the most important feature of this process—the manifestation of social relations in a residential form. Rather than rigid and stable, these relations were a fluid and flexible network, based largely on kinship, but also on relations of economic dependency and friendship. This suggests that the implementation of the 'dual responsibility system' by local government in the 1990s, in which the *hot* group of households was registered and allocated land, has actually created a new type of institution—an official pastoral kingroup, imposing a permanence on what would have in the past been a flexible and contingent residential grouping. It remains to be seen how successful the *hot* unit is as a holder of individuated rights to pastureland.

What virilocality there was appeared to be a function of patrilineal inheritance as much as a strong cultural prescription in its own right. Families usually inherited the bulk of their herds from the husband's family rather than the wife's. That is, they were considered to own a share of the man's family's herds under the management of the head of that family (usually the father). One consequence of younger families usually herding with the husband's family was this tendency towards virilocality, adjusted by the constraints of herding practice.

Not all inheritance was patrilineal, however, and in such cases there was usually a non-virilocal residence arrangement. A herder I knew named Batbayar, for instance, lived with his wife's mother and sisters and had inherited the management of the animals of this family, rather than those of his father's. In this case the son-in-law headed the family even though his wife's mother was still alive. In contrast, Bat-Ochir's marriage represented the more common practice of inheriting animals from the groom's family, and the couple lived with Bat-Ochir's father (Dorj) managing the herds together for much of the year as a result. Although this remained the most usual arrangement among herding families, other residential patterns were far from uncommon. I found that ten of the forty-three pastoral households in Shilingol and Hulun Buir that I knew had non-virilocal residence, and in three of these a son-in-law was expected to inherit animals from his wife's father. Two of the households were headed by a female. Although my data does not constitute a proper survey, it does give some idea of the incidence of different types of residential arrangements. This pattern appeared very similar to that described by Vreeland in his study of pre-revolutionary Halh

[77] See Simukov (ibid. 24–9). He also writes 'There is a clear tendency to join up in *hotons* according to kinship lines in this *bag*', noting that 'agnatic kinship between household heads was most important, accounting for 41% of the *hotons*. Those camping with their sons-in-law came second with 21% of the studied encampments, and other relatives accounted for 35%.'

Mongol society; he writes 'If a family had no sons, it might adopt a daughter's husband. In this event the groom joined his wife in her father's encampment and after the death of the father the daughter would become titular head of the family and manager of the property.'[78] However, in both the cases I encountered of this sort of non-patrilineal inheritance it was not the daughter but her husband who became head of the household after the death of the father.

This residence pattern can be explained as the result of residential choice being influenced first by the wish to live alongside close relatives, and secondly by the likelihood that a couple will inherit animals from the groom's family. The combination, then, of the principles of cognatic kinship and patrilineal inheritance form the framework within which residence is dictated by choice. With the increase in static housing, and the introduction of officially registered *hot*s composed of close kin, however, there has been a reduction in the flexibility with which these residence arrangements can be changed.

In summary, the role of kinship in household residence, inheritance, and social networking can be closely linked to the requirements of pastoral practicality. On the other hand, the role of wider structures of kinship and descent can be closely linked to the history of political forms. During the era of the Chinggisid conquests, kinship described the political landscape and constituted a conceptual field within which the noble lineages placed themselves and showed title to high office. After the Borjigid replaced most of the other noble groups, principles of descent seem to have expressed a less diverse political order, and in many parts of Mongolia was broadly restricted to expressing the distinction between commoner and Borjigid nobility. Later, during the Manchu administration, the kinship system of a number of Mongolian peoples, including the Barga, seems to have responded to the administration's promotion of clans on the Manchu model. In those regions that have retained clans they have also come to be seen as important local and national traditions, and this has provided them with an added *raison d'être* in the post-Maoist era.

[78] Vreeland (1962: 83–4).

8

Symbolism and Meaning

The Household as a System of Meaning

Mongolian culture can be seen to include a repertoire of symbolically meaningful actions and forms which provide institutionalized methods of social expression. This system rests upon socially accepted conventions, which are taught to succeeding generations, and can be compared to a language in that these conventions entail communication and represent social relationships.[1] Symbolic statements are expressed in the spatial arrangement of people and objects, and in the ceremonial or formalized actions of individuals. What is expressed using this cultural or symbolic system is generally more than the passing opinion of an individual. It is generally a public statement about the long-term position of community members. Much of this symbolic behaviour is expressive of relations within the domestic group and between such groups. This is true not only of the rituals of hospitality and formal events such as a wedding ceremony, but also in the everyday location of dwellings and the people within them. Many actions in the *ger* are simultaneously instrumental and expressive. People obviously have to sit, drink, and eat, for example, but a great meaning is assigned to how this is done, particularly in formal situations. This does not imply that such ritual can be seen as simply a means of communication or that there is a single unambiguous meaning expressed by the symbolic actions involved. Just as the appreciation of art, for example, requires a creative reaction on the part of the viewer, who may see meaning in the work that the creator did not intend, so symbolic and ritual acts are something to which the witnesses bring meaning, and are open to a number of interpretations. I offer interpretations I consider to be dominant ones, but these should not be seen as the exclusive or definitive meanings. The Mongolian symbolic repertoire is a means of comprehension as much as it is one of expression, in that it also attaches meaning to that which is observed.

It is interesting to note that the words we use to describe social ranking are almost all based on notions of spatial arrangements. 'Status', 'superiority', and 'subordination' denote the standing or position of the subject. As Leach notes, 'the very words we use in English indicate how deeply ingrained is the idea that this kind of social relationship can be represented in the "logic of

[1] As Nadel (1951: 262) notes, 'We meet with symbolic behaviour whenever emblems or badges or any other "diacritical" signs are employed to indicate social relationships or group membership . . . these emblems are material objects or themselves forms of behaviour.'

the concrete" by differences of relative level, above—below'.[2] The way in which we express concepts of differential social importance is governed by an underlying metaphorical scheme in which the location of items signify their relative importance, and by which 'high' is conceived of as more senior than 'low'. In almost any description of social ranking, we make use of this metaphorical foundation by which location and posture denote social meaning.[3]

In the case of Mongolian culture, however, this metaphor is given more than just a verbal form of expression—it is expressed in the position of people in the *ger*, and the position of the *ger*s in the encampment. The symbolic logic is used to express the relative statuses of those present. As the term 'status' implies, the sort of statements that are made using this symbolic positional system concern the permanent and consensual forms of social ordering, not the temporary regard individuals have for one another. It is inferred that there is a consensual view, a coherent social opinion as to an individual's relative status, and the symbolic language expresses this. It is also inferred that those who do not protest the symbolic statements tacitly acknowledge this order.

The Mongolian word for such social conventions is *yos*[4] (rules or manners). Whilst the word on its own is closer to the meaning of the English words 'rule' or 'manner', the term *yostoi* (to have *yos*) when applied to a person means that they are polite, decent, and know how to behave; and this indicates the normative value attached to such conventions. Humphrey also holds that this symbolic system is an implicit guide to social organization: 'These symbolic acts . . . should be seen as obligations. In other words, their enactment is a creative part of the social process. "Manners" in this sense are not some frill on a basic structure consisting of something else, but themselves make up the organisation of social life. In these rules we see an important indication of how rural Mongol society is meant to be.'[5]

The Conceptual Division of Space

The Mongolian symbolic system is not expressed only through ceremony but also dictates the spatial arrangement of people and objects. The *ger* is always pitched so that the door faces south.[6] This orientation is so central to

[2] Leach (1972: 335).

[3] The way in which a social status is constructed—such as the position of *geryn ezen* (household head)—might also be considered an application of metaphorical thinking. Keen (1995: 504–5) terms constructs of this sort 'enacted metaphors'; however, my interest here is with the more narrow field of metaphorical symbolism, by which (for example) the place in which someone is seated in the *ger* is an expression of the respect and status accorded that person. In this way it is symbolic, and this is why there can be general embarrassment if someone is seated in an inappropriate position.

[4] *Josu*, classical transliteration.

[5] Humphrey (1987: 43).

[6] Or in some cases south-east.

Mongolian culture that the words for 'ahead', 'behind', 'left', and 'right' are the same as those for south, north, east, and west respectively. Humphrey describes the Halh Mongolian conceptual scheme as follows:

> The floor area of the tent was divided into four sections, each of which was valued differently. The area from the door, which faced south, to the fireplace in the centre, was the junior or low-status half, called by the Mongols the 'lower' half. The area at the back of the tent behind the fire was the honorific 'upper' part, named the *xoimor*. This division was intersected by that of the male, or ritually-pure, half, which was to the left of the door as you entered, and the female, impure, or dirty section to the right of the door up to the *xoimor*.[7]

Humphrey's account of the *hoimor*[8] northern part of the *ger* denoting high status, and the junior positions being those closer to the door, is generally true for Inner Mongolia.[9] However, the conceptual significance of the north–south axis in a *ger* might be better described as a status gradient, rather than a division. The *hoimor* does indeed have specific limits, but guests are placed within the area according to their relative status, the most senior sitting further north. Similarly, if the *ger* is full of people this social ranking will be roughly observed off the *hoimor* as well as on it. The Soviet ethnographer S. A. Tokarev also seems to consider the east–west division of conceptual space in the *ger* to be primarily one of gender and ritual purity.[10] However, in Inner Mongolian households the east–west division was not based primarily on these principles alone; it better conformed to notions of public and private, in that 'domestic' things belonged in the east half of the *ger* and 'external' things were appropriately placed in the west.

To summarize, then, the space within the *ger* is conceptually divided using two principles. Firstly there is that of status. High-status people and things are placed in the northernmost part of the *ger*. The more junior an object or individual the further south—towards the door—the position. The second principle is that the western hemisphere of the *ger* is associated with public, external, and to some extent male things, while the eastern hemisphere is the appropriate place for domestic or inside things, which in most contexts are considered female.[11] In Fig. 8.1 positions are marked 2, 3, 4, and 5 in the west, and B and C in the east in order of decreasing status.

[7] Humphrey (1974: 6–9).

[8] *Xoimar*, classical transliteration.

[9] Hamayon (1983*a*: 383–4) constructs a similar scheme whereby the *ger* is divided according to an axis of age (north–south), and an axis of sex (east–west).

[10] Tokarev's work is summarized by Humphrey (1974).

[11] East is also left and west is right. An association between masculinity and the right hand, and feminity and the left, is found in a number of cultures, and this theme has been explored by Needham (1973: pp. xv–xxv, 109–10). Lloyd (1973: 171–5), for example, describes this element of ancient Greek cosmology, and Wieschhoff (1973: 60–4) notes the superior, masculine, associations of the right in several African cultures. Cunningham's (1973: 216) depiction of the division of domestic space in the Atoni house of Indonesian Timor describes an even more familiar conceptualization of order, with male space on the right and female space on the left.

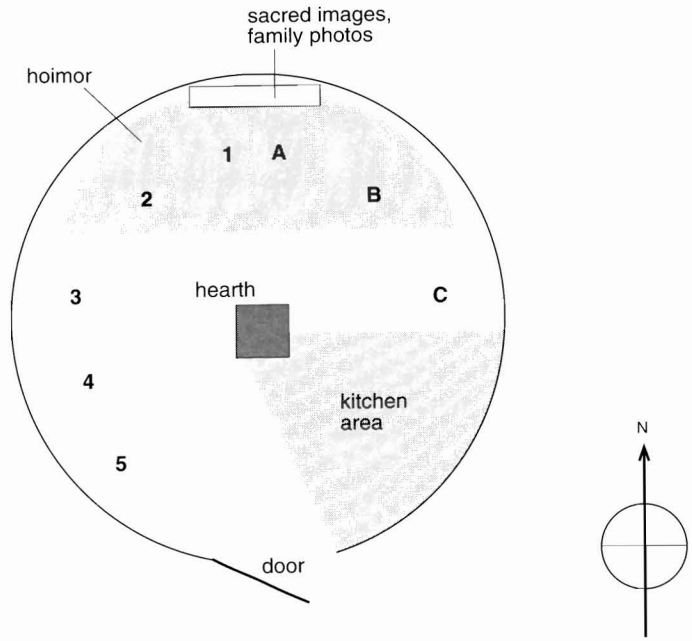


FIG. 8.1 Layout of a *ger*, showing conceptual division of space

In formal situations there is a recognized system for where people should sit depending on their social seniority. The highest-status position for both people and objects is 1A, opposite the door, in the place known as the *hoimor* where there is generally a carpet or rug to sit on. Guests (of both sexes) will be seated in the west half of the *ger*. Depending on their seniority, in formal situations they will be placed nearer the *hoimor* or the door. Unless the women know the resident family so well as to be in some way members of it, female guests will also usually sit in the west half of the *ger* when visiting another household, and this demonstrates that the east–west axis is not based simply on gender. The hosts will generally sit on the eastern side, and on formal occasions they will also tend to observe the order of seniority. The kitchen area, however, as a work zone, is somewhat separate. Junior and senior women generally use this portion of the *ger*, but with regard for practicality rather than status position.

In day-to-day life, when there are no guests present, it is the men who generally sit in the western hemisphere, and the objects that are placed there reflect this. The saddle will usually be put on the west side of the door—easy to get out and associated with 'outside' and with men who generally make more use of the saddle than do the women. Things generally used by men, such as toolboxes and bridles, are placed on the west side; the brand for

marking the household's animals, and the gun if there is one, is often kept up towards the *hoimor*. The kitchen area of the *ger* with cupboard, cooking, and eating utensils is located in the eastern half, again near the door for practical reasons, as foodstuffs are brought in and slops slung out throughout the working day.

The west (outside, guest, male) side of the *ger* is formally more respected in many contexts, although not necessarily so. The flow of hospitality and service is from east to west. This makes practical sense because the food and drink are kept and prepared on the east side and passed to the guests or family members on the west side; but it also makes sense in terms of the symbolic logic of Mongolian culture. The hosts provide for the guests, the women cook for the men. This is common to other Mongolian groups. Humphrey translates a section of a Buryat novel in which a mother protests when her daughter-in-law offers to feed her. 'So you want to sit me on the right (west) side of the fire? I am to sit and sit and wait with an open mouth for a tasty bit of food from a foreign hand?'[12] Here the mother protests the lot of becoming a passive recipient of the flow of food and hospitality from the eastern to the western halves of the *ger*. This logic also extends beyond the confines of the *ger* itself, as is described below.

Leach mentions the organization of domestic space in the Mongolian *ger* and notes the 'rigidity of this pattern by which the rank and status and sex of an individual exactly determined the space he or she might occupy'. Leach argues that this constructed order is necessary because in Mongolia's featureless plains 'the natural terrain fails to provide an obvious focus to which the whole may be anchored'. The ordering of domestic space is a way of answering 'a deep psychological need for the sense of security that comes of knowing where you are. But "knowing where you are" is a matter of recognising social as well as territorial position.'[13] Clearly the ordering of domestic space does indicate social position, but Leach's presumed psychological need for territorial location does not provide a very compelling explanation. Locals do not generally see their Mongolian environment as featureless, although visitors might. Even the steppe or gobi topographies provide a number of recognizable features and landmarks to the trained eye, and pastoralists generally 'know where they are' with reference to the landscape, just as people do in more densely settled parts of the world.

The organization of domestic space is also highly practical. The pastoral *ger* is both a residence and a workplace; knowing where people and objects are likely to be at any given moment facilitates its smooth operation. The low-status area by the door is also necessarily the dirtiest. People are continually stepping in and out of the dwelling, and to keep those objects by the door that are most likely to be taken outside helps keep the cleaner, northern half

[12] Humphrey (1983: 190). [13] Leach (1976: 53–4).

of the dwelling dry and free of mud. Similarly, to locate the kitchen area by the door allows the women working there to enter and leave the dwelling without moving across the northern half, and having the 'male' objects on the other side helps to prevent the men who normally use them from getting in the women's way. The high status of the *hoimor* reflects the fact that it is furthest from the more dirty and draughty door region, a good place for the carpet or *shirdeg*[14] felts to be placed, and valued and delicate objects are less likely to get knocked or trodden on if they are further from the activity by the entrance. Infants as well as guests make use of the comfortable *hoimor*, and families without beds can sleep there.

This spatial logic extends from the *ger* to the encampment where the junior households generally place their *ger* to the east of their seniors.[15] Sons and married daughters place their gers to the east of the parental *ger*, and clients generally place theirs to the east of these.[16] The obligation of service flows, just as hospitality does within the *ger*, from east to west. In return the west side owes an obligation of dignified consideration and support to the east. When visiting it is polite to take a present (*beleg*) for one's hosts. So that, on formal occasions the visitors sit in the western side of the *ger* and pass the gifts across to the hosts in the eastern half.

The Uses of Ceremony

Ceremony mediates between private and public spheres, both between and within households. Guest and host are defined, and senior and junior status positions are enacted through ceremonial hospitality. When the private domain of the household comes into contact with either the public sphere or the spiritual world, ceremony is employed to mediate between these realms. Furthermore, in both social and spiritual contexts the same types of ceremonial currency are used—similar objects are exchanged between households and offered to spirits.

Ceremonies of hospitality within the *ger* usually occur when guests are present, mediating between individuals of different households, as the domestic world of the *ger* meets the public world of the guests. Generally the less well the two parties know each other the more formal and ceremonial the event.

[14] This is written *sirdeg* in the classical script. It means a felt rug, also used for saddlepads.

[15] Chagdarsurung (1979: 21) describes a different camp arrangement that is sometimes used by Halh. This layout is in the form of a box, with the animals kept in the centre. Although *ail*s are generally in the form of a line, this still conforms to the same general principles I describe, in that the senior *ger* is placed to the west (in fact the south-west corner of the box).

[16] The low status of the eastmost *ger* in a Mongolian proverb ('Muul bolbol jüün geryn har oboohoi') can be loosely translated as meaning, 'If there is discord, look to the filthy eastern hovel' ('Magula bolbal jegyn ger-yn xar-a obugaxai', classical transcription). This is echoed in folklore in which the eastern *tenger* (*tengri*) are younger brethren of the western *tenger* and are malevolent. This is noted by Hamayon (1983*a*: 381–3) in her analysis of different versions of the Buryat Geser epic.

Inside the *ger* guests will be seated in the west side of the *hoimor* and always given a bowl of tea, often accompanied by some *aaruul* (dried curds) or other milk product. If the host has a *höörög* snuff-bottle he may offer it to the guest to sample, and receive one from the guest in return if they both have one. Especially honoured guests, or good friends, may be presented with a glass of spirit alcohol, and perhaps a cigarette. Traditionally, before drinking the alcohol a second or third finger of the free hand is dipped in the liquid and flicked three times. I found a number of different explanations and interpretations given to this convention. Some informants felt it had no real meaning any longer but that it was simply polite, whilst in Barga the older people said that the flicks of alcohol were libations first to *Tenger*[17] (heaven), secondly to the *gal golomt* (the hearth), and lastly to the *deedes* (*degedys*) (the ancestors). However, I was also given other explanations, and for most people it seemed to be more important to know and practise the custom than to explain it.[18]

Bodily movements and postures are also part of the symbolic repertoire, as the body itself is a rich site of meaning. The head is the most honoured part of the body, and the crown of the head is the route by which the soul leaves at the time of death. The forehead is a particularly important site, and touching something to your forehead shows that you honour it—for example if one spills highly valued *chagaan idee* (dairy products)[19] it is customary to dab a finger in it and press it to one's forehead to show respect. Similarly, if one is offered alcohol and does not wish to drink it, wetting a finger in it and pressing it to the forehead honours the precious gift before returning it. If presented with a *höörög* snuff-bottle one should either try some or smell the bottle and to be really polite one can touch it to one's forehead before returning it. Hats, as the covering of the head, are also honoured and should be placed in a high position. To press down on another's head (*tolgoi darah*)[20] is figurative of oppression. If an official is hard and dictatorial one might say he or she 'presses down on people's heads'.

The term *mörgöh* means to bow, prostrate, kow tow, or knock one's forehead against something. This is the enacted, bodily form that worship takes, so that the everyday term for worship or prayer is the same—*mörgöh*. This may be done in front of a *burhan* or even an *oboo*. The Barga have a local term, *suhreh*, for a very formal posture used to greet someone senior. One knee is bent towards the ground, without touching it, and the arms used to raise the hem of the *deel*, and the head lowered.

[17] This is written *ngri* in the classical script, and can mean heaven, sky, god, or weather.

[18] Some informants told me that the libations were to the sky, earth, and winds, whilst others said they were for the sky, the hearth, and everybody.

[19] *Cagan idegen*, classical transliteration.

[20] *Tolugai daruhu*, classical transliteration.

The chest is associated with mental activity, such as remembering or learning. The term to memorize (learn by heart) is *cheejleh*[21]—based on the root *cheej* (chest). A *cheej ihtai hüün* (a person with a great chest) is someone with a good memory or retentive mind. The liver, *eleg*,[22] is associated with the emotions. The term *eleg emtereh*, 'the liver to break', means to be heartbroken. The feet are associated with low, profane themes, in explicit contrast with the sacred head. One should not put boots or shoes on a table, for example, or even on the bed if one wishes to be polite. In formal situations one should not bare one's feet. Treading on things—or stepping over them—is a powerful symbol of disrespect. One should not step on or over the *uurga* (pole-lasso), for example or *emeel* (saddle).[23] These are important and valued pieces of pastoral equipment the breaking or malfunction of which can cause disaster, and to devalue them symbolically is inauspicious. Showing disrespect for other things, even humble objects, can be unwise. Some say that a pregnant woman should not step over a rope or cord (*dees*)[24] or her child might have problems with its own (umbilical) cord. There were historic prohibitions against stepping on the threshold of the *ger*, which date back to Chinggis Khan's day. In fact, however, this does happen quite a lot, and the wooden thresholds of most *ger*s show the wear of countless feet.

Misunderstanding of the symbolic code can be embarrassing. A Mongolian friend visited an American acquaintance who had purchased a rug with the image of Chinggis Khan on it, which she placed on the floor of her office, by the door. When my friend visited her he was faintly horrified to find the venerable Khan's face at his feet. Unwilling to show disrespect by stepping on it or over it, he eventually had to ask his hostess to move it before he could enter the room with a clear conscience.

Body posture becomes particularly important in formal contexts. Although they may lounge or lie down in private, in any vaguely formal situation senior men generally sit upright, often cross-legged if in a *ger* or in the absence of chairs. Women, who also sit any way they like at other times, have a polite seated stance for formal occasions, in which one knee is raised and the other leg tucked underneath them. As it is relatively easy to rise from this position, this posture communicates a willingness to provide guests with more tea or food. Men, particularly young or junior men, will also sometimes sit like this, unless they have been seated on the *hoimor*. Sometimes this is simply because it is more comfortable, or more practical when there is little space or the floor is dirty. But in general the more upright and less reclining the body posture is, the more humility and respect it shows for the host family, and it indicates that the person involved is not casually taking their ease, but is ready to move about or go out of the *ger* as appropriate. In general, socially senior

[21] *Cegezile*, classical transliteration.

[22] *Elige*, classical transliteration.

[23] *Emegel*, classical transliteration.

[24] *Degesy*, classical transliteration.

persons will remain sedately seated when offered food and drink, whilst juniors may lean forward and may even rise to their feet when served in formal situations.

On very formal occasions, or with extremely high-status guests, items may be presented using ritual gestures, using both hands with a slight bow from the waist. The order in which guests are served can be very important. Generally the person who is considered of highest status is served first, and usually this is the oldest person. For instance when the relatives gathered before the wedding in Bayan Gol the oldest person present was a woman, Oyuun, 78 years old. She was treated as of highest status despite the presence of Damdinsüren and Sodnom who were Party officials. As a result she was placed in the northernmost part of the *hoimor*, and always served first, indicating that in this context age outweighed gender as a criterion of seniority.

The significance attached to the order in which people drink at a formal gathering also seems to be extremely old. *The Secret History of the Mongols* records a comparable incident in the early thirteenth century. Batu, one of the royal princes, drank first at a formal victory celebration. Güyük and another prince, who reputedly considered themselves his equals, were so insulted that they left the feast without drinking, and a major political row ensued that had to be referred to the emperor for settlement.[25]

Sacred Objects in the Ger

The position of *burhan* (sacred images) in the home follows the symbolic logic of domestic order. In everyday speech the term *burhan* refers both to sacred Buddhist deities such as Burhan Bagsh (Shakyamuni), Anghany Burham (the Primordial Buddha), Dar (the goddess Tara), and Ayuush[26] and also to images of them (such as paintings and statuettes). Before communist control almost every *ger* had a small *burhan* which was placed north of the *hoimor*, just behind where an honoured guest would be seated. The family photographs are now usually hung in this position, and it is interesting to note that they occupy a high-status position in the *ger* comparable not only to that of the sacred Buddhist images, but to their forerunners—the *ongod* figures of the household's ancestors.

The positioning of the *burhan* in the *ger* can be seen as analogous to a permanent honoured occupant of the *hoimor*. As such it is both a member of the household and a public figure who is visiting it. In this sense it represents a permanent link between public and private spheres, mediating between the household and the wider social and spiritual world. In the post-collective period many families still had *burhan* placed in this position in their houses,

[25] Onon (1990: 164–6); Cleaves (1982: 215–17).

[26] *Anxan u Burxan, Dara,* and *Ajusi*, classical transliteration. The 'Primordial Buddha' is Vajradhava (*vacirdar-a*) the Thunderbolt-holder.

in a few they were in full view, but in others they were placed inside a sideboard or cabinet so that they could not be seen, as a reaction to the persecution of Buddhism.

The cupboard opposite the door was also the place for other high-status or sacred objects such as photographs of family members, living and deceased. Bottles of especially good alcohol might be placed in it, an expensive item such as a clock or radio would usually be placed on it, and religious books, if there were any, should be placed high up in this area of the *ger*. In Shilingol some households had a picture of Chinggis Khan placed in this position or hung behind it, next to the family photographs. This fashion had appeared in the 1980s and was considered to be an expression of Mongolian identity, and to some extent, national pride. The hats worn by the men of the household are also often placed on or near this cupboard when not in use, and should generally be put in a high place. In Bayan Gol I sometimes wore a battered cotton cap, and when it was not on my head it was habitually folded and stuffed into my pocket. I was puzzled at first to be continually finding the cap on the *shüügee* (cupboard)[27] at the back of the *ger*. Finally, Chimeg (Dorj's wife) pulled the hat out of my pocket and placed it in this respected position despite my protests. She explained that no matter how battered and dirty, a hat was a respected object which should be placed in an appropriate place.[28] The men's wide-brimmed hats (highly practical for the herdsman who spends most of the day in the sun), and the women's head-scarves are traditionally both kept in respected (although separate) places in the cupboard at the back of the *ger*.

Many of the conventions that make up the symbolic repertoire are at least 700 years old. In the twelfth century the northern part of the tent was of high status, and the southern area by the door low status. The son of a local ruler, To'oril Khan of the Kereid, is recorded as making accusations that Chinggis Khan's faction lorded it over the Kereid aristocrats. 'If a kinswoman of us went unto them, she would stand at the door and only look upon the back [of the tent]. If a kinswoman of them came unto us, she would sit at the back [of the tent] and look upon the door.'[29] In this case both the position and posture of the occupants of Chinggis Khan's twelfth-century tent communicate status difference using the same principles that a modern Mongolian family uses. William of Rubruck, who visited Mongolia in the thirteenth century, gives a description of the division of space within the *ger* which is virtually identical to that which is found today.[30] Rubruck's account also

[27] *Shygyi*, classical transliteration.

[28] Humphrey (1987: 47) also mentions this as one of the 'one hundred rules of good behaviour in rural Mongolia'.

[29] Cleaves (1982: 89).

[30] Vitebsky's (1974: 34–5) analysis of Rubruck shows that the *ger* faced south and that men and their equipment were allocated the west half, whilst women and the domestic objects associated with them were placed in the east. Even in the encampment of Attila the Hun, senior dwellings seem to have been placed to the west.

mentions that the wives of a polygynous man set up their *ger* from west to east in descending order of seniority.

The conceptual ordering of domestic space remained so pervasive that Party members and others used it constantly to make statements about modern political situations, and expressing respect for political emblems and national leaders (themselves symbols of a particular political order or policy). Lubsandorj, for example, as a leftist Party member in Bayan Gol, identified himself as such in a number of ways. He wore a blue 'Mao cap' and Chinese clothes which he considered modern and progressive, rather than the traditional Mongolian *deel*. He lived in a mud-brick house in the *sum* centre where he worked, maintaining the aged *sum* electricity generator. Unlike that of most Mongolian households, who cultivated rather little, his garden was bursting with neat rows of huge vegetables, resembling those of the few hundred Chinese settlers who also lived in the *sum* centre. The walls of Lubsandorj's sitting room were covered with huge posters of Deng Xiaoping, Zhou Enlai, and other CCP leaders that had come to be favoured after the Cultural Revolution. Although Lubsandorj had condemned them at the time the images of Deng and Zhou indicated his obedience to the post-Mao leadership. Despite his general attitude of disapproval towards tradition, however, his room conformed to the same scheme as the most old-fashioned households. Guests were ushered to the right-hand side of the room (as one stands facing the door) where there were two armchairs (something of a luxury in that remote area). The one further from the door was higher status than the other, just as sitting places in a *ger* would be. Lubsandorj's bed was on the left (east), and it is here that he and his wife would sit when they had visitors, observing the division of space into domestic and guest areas. Opposite the door, at the rear of the room, was the glass cupboard such as one finds in most *gers* in the same relative position, with valued objects placed on it. It was here that the photographs of the couple and their relatives were placed, exactly as one would find in any herdsman's tent. And it was on the wall above this that the giant posters of CCP leaders were hung, in the high-status position that *burhan* would occupy in a religious household.[31]

A Barga Wedding

The Mongolian wedding, with its wealth of explicit symbolism, provides a rather elaborated example of the use of the symbolic repertoire. The following account is an attempt to illustrate the role such meanings played in the context of an actual ceremony.

[31] Indeed Lubsandorj, who was usually very disapproving about such 'superstitions' as the *oboo*, accepted the usefulness of the *dal* (transliterated *dalu* from the classical script) scapulimancy when it came to finding strayed livestock. This form of divination involves heating a sheep's collarbone and interpreting the lines that appear. 'There were a number of old men and a few young men who can read the *dal*,' he said. 'Herdsmen come to them to ask where their animals are and after reading the *dal* they will tell them which direction to go and look for them. Sometimes they are wrong, but usually they are right.'

In July 1988 I was invited by Sodnom, the Party official, to the wedding of his daughter Chimedsüren. The groom was 25-year-old Bat-Ochir, the son of Dorj. At about 6 o'clock I arrived at his *ail*, and he emerged, drunk, to hug me ostentatiously. This was the first time I had met him and I was bustled in and made to sit on the *hoimor* with the older guests. I was considered to be (for formal purposes) of the bride's party because I had been introduced by Sodnom, and so was seated on the western side.

There were about twenty-five people present, all of them dressed in their best *deel*, most of them crowded into the new *ger* which the couple would occupy after their marriage. The guests, both men and women, were seated on the west side, whilst in the east half of the *ger* the host's party, mostly Bat-Ochir's relatives, also included both sexes. Sodnom soon left to see to the preparations being made at his own *ail*. The atmosphere was good-naturedly solemn, most of the guests having already had a fair amount to drink, and in the July heat the crowded tent was stifling. I soon found myself listening to the long and tragic life history of one of the older and drunker guests—Dashsüren (74), the brother of the woman who had adopted Dorj as a child. The old man was in tears for most of the account and his slurred and wandering speech was hard to understand, but he was determined that I should comprehend how he was suffering. 'I am alone,' he would sob, 'my wife has died, I have no children.' He explained that his relations did not help him, did not visit him. Indeed, no one was remotely sympathetic and I was the only listener he could find. Dorj mocked him—'What's your name?' he asked 'Dashsüren? What's that? Dog?' When the old man began to croak a little song, sobbing as he did so, the company burst into laughter. This incident shocked only me, and I later found out that Dashsüren had implicated his relations during the movement to 'uproot and eliminate' the Nei Ren Dang during the Cultural Revolution. He was now held in contempt by most of his relatives who considered him a drunk, given to endless self-pity.

The time was spent in continuous rounds of ceremonial hospitality, each one identical in form. First, one of the junior women of the *ail* would serve tea, passing the bowl with a bow to the most senior person first, and then to the guest seated to the west of him or her, and so on. After the guests seated in the western half of the *ger* had been served, the household members seated to the east would be given tea. Next a huge bowl of sweets, with a lump of butter on the top, was presented. A fragment of butter was thrown by each guest onto the hearth (to honour the *gal golomt*[32]) and a fragment eaten. The clarified butter (*shar tos*[33]) was placed on top of the sweets because milk

[32] The hearth, and a symbol of the family's continuity.

[33] *Sira tosu*, classical transliteration.

products (*chagaan idee*) are important ceremonial items. They are considered to be the transmitters of *hishig*—blessing or good fortune.[34]

After the bowl of sweets had been passed around in the same order of seniority as before by one of the young women, the *har arih*[35] (alcohol) was served, and this was always done by a man. Although on other occasions this was normally done by the head of the household, in the case of the wedding one of Bat-Ochir's younger brothers served alcohol in the usual thimble-like glasses. As the glass was handed over the young man bowed deeply and offered the glass with his left hand whilst his right was held open, palm up, so that the fingers approached the proffered glass. The senior guests received the various offerings seated, whilst those of lower status rose to one knee, and the most junior guests actually stood to receive the tea, sweets, and glass. After taking the glass each guest observed the ritual of dipping their finger in the drink and flicking it three times. They then sipped the alcohol and returned it to the server who topped up the glass. Then the server passed to the next guest. As there were more guests than glasses only the more senior people present could keep their glass and put it down, the rest of the company sipped and returned the alcohol. After this one cigarette was offered to each guest, who could smoke it or not as they wished, but who was obliged to accept it. The cigarette was offered between the food and drink, sometimes more and sometimes less often, as a less intrinsic part of the ceremonial hospitality.

Each round of hospitality took half an hour or so, performed solemnly in the packed, sweltering *ger*. No one complained, however, and the ceremonial hospitality continued for round after round. At about 11 o'clock in the evening I was given a lift in the *sum* jeep to Sodnom's *ail*, which was about 4 kilometres to the north west, so that I could see the ceremony that would start at the bride's camp. Identical hospitality ceremonies had been in process and I was incorporated into them immediately. At first I was seated on the west side of the *hoimor* denoting my status as a guest. Here the specific ceremonial of the wedding began to effect the usual (though highly formal) hospitality customs. Rather than the head of the household, the most senior person in the context of the wedding was the *nagach* (*nagacu*)—the brother of the bride's mother. In the wedding ritual it was the two 'mother's brothers' that acted as the masters of ceremony—Bat on Chimedsüren's side and Damdinsüren on Bat-Ochir's.

The groom was supposed to arrive at midnight, and as it became clear that he was late the atmosphere in the *ger* became uncomfortable. At 12.25 Bat-Ochir finally arrived with his entourage of about twenty young men (friends and relatives) led by Damdinsüren, who had arrived on horseback and circled Sodnom's camp in the darkness. When they entered Sodnom and Damdinsüren quarrelled briefly over the lateness of the groom's party. (Although there is a tradition for there to be some good-natured argument between the host and the groom's party, Sodnom later told me that he was genuinely annoyed at Damdinsüren's lateness and demeanour.) The two men lapsed into a glowering silence. The atmosphere became icy, and no one spoke as one of Chimedsüren's sisters served tea and sweets, and her brother served drinks. I and the other visitors who came in the jeep had moved over to the eastern side of the *ger* when the groom's party arrived, so that the western half was completely given over to them. This showed our status in this context, we were not of the groom's party but guests of the bride's father. In this situation our association with the household was sufficient to displace us from the guests' half of the *ger*.

[34] *Hishig* (*kesig*, classical transliteration) is an important concept and the *dallaga* (*dalalg-a*) invocation of *hishig* was important for traditional ritual occasions. See Jagchid and Hyer (1979: 112, 121).

[35] *Xar-a araki*, classical transliteration.

Bat, the official host, soothed his brother and welcomed the guests; gradually people relaxed and started to chat. All the members of the groom's party were served first, starting with the most senior member (Damdinsüren) sitting opposite the door and proceeding down the west side towards the door. Then the senior member of the host (bride's) party was served—in this case Bat—and so on to the most junior. Bat-Ochir sat in the junior, southern, part of the western side, whilst Chimedsüren sat in the correspondingly junior position in the eastern, domestic area, surrounded by her own entourage made up of about ten other young women of about the same age, relatives and friends, dressed in their finest *deel*s. There was a second round of serving tea, sweets, alcohol, and cigarettes, and now the rituals of hospitality became extremely formal. When serving alcohol the man (a member of the household) who was serving would not only bow more deeply than ever, but raise the hem of his *deel* with his right hand and nearly touch it to his forehead at the same time. After this the young women began to sing traditional songs, and the rest of the company joined in. They sang about ten songs, unaccompanied and soulful melodies that seemed to unite the company for the first time. Chimedsüren wept a little (as is traditional), and so did her parents. One in particular touched everyone present with the sentiment of the occasion, a traditional wedding 'long-song' called *Galuun Hüjüü Jeerd* 'Goose-necked Chestnut Horse' which expressed the sorrow of separation as the bride left her parents' home.[36]

The first part is sung to the bride while she stays silent:

Galuun hüjüü jeerdeeree,	On the goose-necked chestnut horse,
Ganhuulan guiblan mor'toi-yaa,	Riding, shaking and swaying,
Gajryn hol mordson,	Left for a distant land,
Gangai düü min' höörhii shüü,	Oh my poor sister, dressed so fine,

[36] Words that are made ambiguous by my modified transliteration system are listed here using standard Cyrillic transliteration: *hüzüü*, *zeredeeree*, *guivlan*, *gazryn*, *zeeriin*, *jirvegnelen*, *zeregleenii*, *jaahan*, *zulzaga*, *zayaaj*, *bömbüilsön*, *eej*.

Jeeriin hüjüü zeerdeeree,	On the antelope-necked chestnut horse,
Jirbeghelen tüb türgen mortoi-yaa,	Riding so fast, shimmering,
Jeregleenii hol mordson,	Gone far as a mirage,
Jaahan düü min′ höörhii shüü.	Oh, my poor little younger sister.
Hulsan deegüür degdegch,	You who fly up above the rushes,
Hungiin juljaga höörhii döö,	Oh, poor baby swan,
Hol gajar jayaaj mordson,	Left for a distant, destined land,
Hüühen düü min′ höörhii döö.	Oh, my poor dear younger sister.
Dersen deegüür degdegch,	You who fly up above the feather-grass,
Dergeehii shubuu höörhii döö,	Poor fledgeling bird,
Tertee gajar jayaaj mordson,	Gone beyond a destined land,
Hüühen düü min′ höörhii döö.	Oh, my poor dear younger sister.

The bride and the unmarried women replied with the following verses:

Algan deeree büübeilsen,	Cradled on the palm of the hand,
Aminy eej min′ höörhii shüü,	My own dear poor mother,
Ailyn gajar mordohod,	Setting off to a neighbouring land,
Aabyn ger min′ dulaan shüü.	Oh, my father's home is warm.
Eleg deeree büübeilsen,	Cradled in her heart (liver),
Enhrii eej min′ höörhii shüü,	Oh, my poor loving mother,
Etgeediin gajar mordohod,	Setting off for a strange land,
Echgiin min′ ger l dulaan shüü.	Oh, my father's home is so warm.

After this, mutton was served, although not in the formal *shuus* (a whole cooked sheep, arranged in a distinctive way).[37] We ate the mutton with bowls of hot noodles, and because of a shortage of bowls some of the more junior guests had to wait until the others had finished and their bowls had been wiped clean before getting a helping.

Gifts were presented by the bride's party,[38] and in this situation I had the unpleasant realization that this included me. I knew that I should have gifts, but had mistakenly given them to the heads of each household when I arrived, which is usual in other contexts.[39] I scrabbled in my backpack for some other offerings, as the other guests ritually handed over their rich presents. The motley collection of objects I scraped together consisted of a postcard showing a picture of Shakespeare, a torch without batteries powered by continually squeezing the grip, a solar- and battery-powered calculator, and a small ashtray. At the time I had hoped that the quantity of gifts might make up for their lack of quality, and they were accepted graciously enough and

[37] *Sigysy*, classical transliteration.

[38] Although traditionally bride-wealth was given, today this is rare and instead it was usual for both families to provide gifts for the new couple.

[39] They had been rather traditional gifts, consisting of a bottle of *har arih*, a *hadag*, one and a half kilos of sweets and biscuits for each, and a thermos flask for the groom's household and a quilt cover for the bride's.

placed with the others behind the *hoimor*. But Bat-Ochir later expressed his puzzlement as to what use any of these items might be to him.

The bride's relatives and friends handed over their presents in turn to the new couple. There were an impressive number of expensive items, a beautiful hand-powered sewing machine, six *deel* made of rich cloth, several bolts of fine material including some silk, half a dozen or more expensive woollen blankets, five large, new, locking suitcases; each major present was accompanied by boxes of sugar, tea, thermos flasks, and other smaller gifts. The total cost of the items must have been between 3,000 and 4,000 yuan, which is around half the total annual income of a typical household and represented several years' savings. No alcohol or *hadag* (ceremonial silk scarves) were given and the presents tended to be those associated with domestic, female areas of traditional life. The young couple stood in the junior domestic area (the south-east quadrant of the *ger*) and the presents flowed in the opposite direction from the service and hospitality—from the high-status guest area in the north-west to the bride and groom in the lower-status householders' area in the south-east.

At about 4 a.m. people staggered outside to stretch and dance to the music Sodnom had set playing through a borrowed *sum* administration loudspeaker set up near the *ail*. It was mostly of the 'Waltzing Matilda' variety of Chinese-produced Western music played on an electric organ, but some of the young men were drunk enough to dance to it in stamping, staggering pairs, clutching each other in a rough imitation of ballroom dancing, and occasionally forcing me to join them. It was nevertheless a relief to escape from the cramped interior of the *ger* with its stifling atmosphere and the eventually agonizing crosslegged position.

Some guests, including me, dozed for an hour or so in the brightening light of dawn. By 5.30 a.m. it seemed that the party was about to leave, but an endless series of delays prevented the departure. One such delay occurred because I was the only guest with a camera, and was rapidly enrolled as the wedding photographer and obliged to take forty or more shots of various combinations of exhausted relatives and guests. Finally at about 7 a.m. we set off. First the groom's party circled the camp clockwise three times on horseback and then set off towards Dorj's camp, some of the young men racing and charging each other at the gallop in the traditional way. Next the bride, surrounded by her party of about twenty-five young women on horses, followed them. They circled the camp in an identical manner before setting off at a more sedate pace.

At the groom's camp the companies circled the *ail* before dismounting and going to sit in the gleaming new *ger* that Dorj had made himself for the new couple. As the number of guests had grown to over a hundred by this point, only around sixty of the higher-status guests could cram into the new *ger*, the rest entered Dorj's own *ger*, located to the west of his son's. Now the bride

Pl. 7. Young women of the bride's party

and groom demonstrated their new status as householders in their own right by both standing in the south-eastern area of the *ger* and serving the assembled company, thus repaying the earlier flow of gifts from the north-west to the south-east, with a flow of hospitality in the opposite direction. In this context the bride's party were the guests and those on the groom's side were placed on the eastern side of the *hoimor*. As the new couple served each guest with maximum ritual, bowing and touching their *deel*s to their foreheads, the groom's mother's brother—Damdinsüren—stood behind them, as if legitimating the new household.

At this stage the groom's relatives gave presents, if anything slightly less valuable than those given by the bride's side. Again they were predominantly domestic presents, more fine material, sugar, tea, sweets, a suitcase; but this time there were also a few bottles of alcohol presented, which is a gift considered most appropriate for adult males. I learnt afterwards that although not presented during the wedding, Sodnom had given his daughter the fine horse and beautiful saddle on which she rode to the encampment, as well as the traditional gift of a cow with a calf to provide the household with the necessary blessing of milk and to represent fertility.[40] Dorj, on the other hand,

[40] The going price for such a cow and calf at that time was around 1,000 yuan.

had provided one large ox-cart with a fine Japanese-made metal trunk on it, and a smaller ox-cart with the traditional felt covering. He had also made the wooden frame and door of the *ger* himself, and bought the felt and canvas coverings and all the furniture.[41] Chimeg, Bat-Ochir's mother, had handsewn the decorations on a beautiful hanging that stretched around the inside of the tent, as well as plaiting the three horse-hair ropes used on the exterior. In total the gifts from the groom's side were considered to be approximately equal in value to those given by the bride's relatives.

By about 9.30 a.m. the strong July sun on the new *ger* had made the extremely cramped conditions inside it all but unbearable. Somehow the endless rounds of ritual hospitality continued. We ate some mutton and noodles and finally at about 2.00 p.m. people began to leave, some of the unrelated ones to return to their homes, but most to rest somewhere nearby. I was collared by the by-now extremely drunk Dashsüren who insisted I lie down and rest by him in one of the sweltering *ger* nearby. He proceeded to cough up a large amount of phlegm onto the back of my neck whilst in drunken sleep. Although somewhat nauseating, this was, at least, mercifully cooling, as the temperature was now well over 40°C.

Most people dozed as best they could in the oppressive heat of the afternoon, and at about 5.00 p.m. Sodnom arrived with about twenty other relatives of the bride. The senior relatives of the two families were received in the new *ger* with as many guests as could fit in. After being served by the new couple with the established round of hospitality, a *shüüs* appeared. This traditional dish consists of a cooked sheep arranged on a large platter so that the head is on top, facing the front, the tail is at the back, and haunches and ribs carefully arranged at the sides. The *shüüs* was presented to Damdinsüren—the groom's mother's brother—who performed a short ritual before distributing it. First he took a rib, cut off some meat and threw it on the hearth, then cut meat from the lip and ate it, next he cut meat from the other lip and threw that on the hearth. Damdinsüren then cut some meat from the head and ate it, and next took a cut from behind the ears and gave it to the senior guests (Sodnom's relatives), and finally he cut along the back and tail so that there were three large strips of almost pure mutton fat which was distributed to everyone along with the rest of the meat.[42] Damdinsüren explained that the fat from the tail was particularly valued, so it was important that everyone present got a portion. He did not know the exact meaning of all the other various cuts, but said that traditionally this was the proper formula. The atmosphere became more relaxed, people chatted as they ate, and later noodles in mutton broth was served four or five times until everyone was quite full.

[41] I estimate the total value of the goods Dorj gave to be between 3,000 and 5,000 yuan.

[42] This ceremony is clearly similar to the Buryat *toolei* ceremony, which is also carried out at weddings, but is not identical. See Humphrey (1983: 386–7).

Pl. 8. The bride and groom

Along with his guests, Dorj became more and more drunk. He wept from time to time, recalling how he had suffered in the Cultural Revolution. At about 6.30 p.m. he was carried out of the *ger* unconscious. He consequently missed the new couple's ceremonial departure. Bat-Ochir and Chimedsüren, dressed in beautiful matching green velvet *deel*s mounted their horses and rode away to stay with relatives at the *sum* centre for a few days.

The wedding was officially over, but the aftermath continued. Many of the guests had come a long way by horse and could not leave until the following morning. That night the old women organized a sleeping area for all the younger children; a large cotton box was rigged in the *ger* to keep the mosquitoes and other biting insects out. One doting old aunt also slept in it with her feet sticking out as she cuddled the children. I was kindly given a bed, only to find an hour or so later that Dorj had also decided to sleep on it. The

bed was too narrow and the herdsman's continually active elbows too sharp for me to stay there, so I moved to the floor, but without a blanket or protection from the voracious mosquitoes I slept poorly.

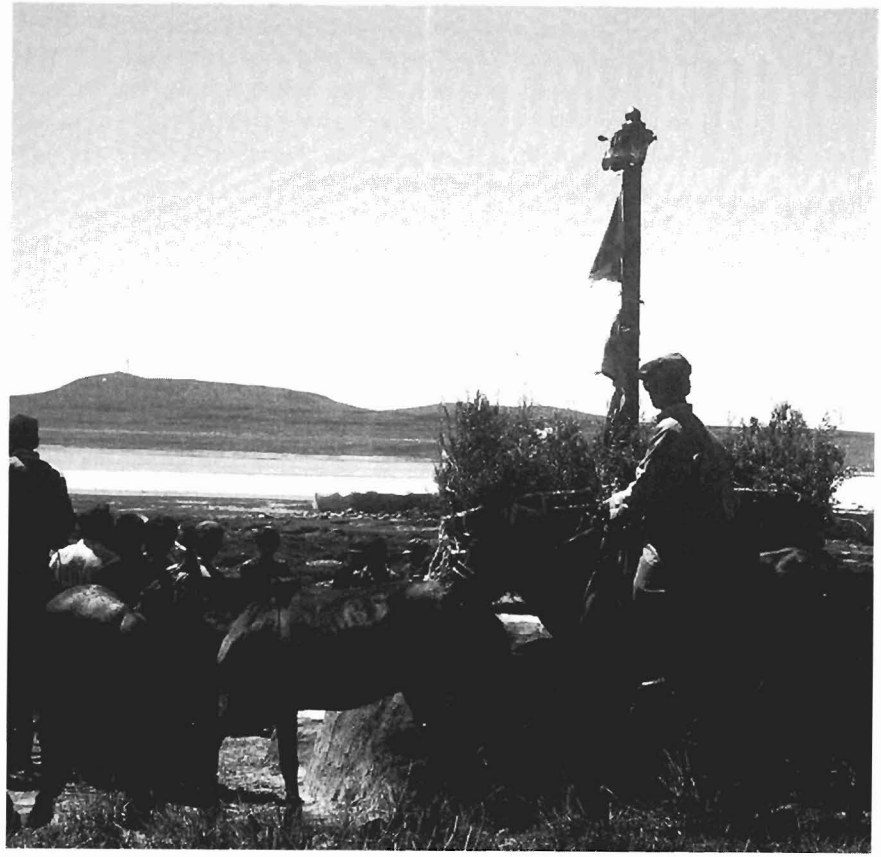
The Oboo *Ceremony: Cultural Meaning and Social Practice*

The rites that are carried out at the *oboo* (ritual cairn) provide another example of highly symbolic ceremonial. In this case, however, the symbolism does not seem primarily concerned with the household, but with wider social units and their relationship with the natural and spiritual environment. Unlike the wedding and hospitality rituals, the *oboo* ceremony (*oboony tahilga*)[43] is not carried out in domestic space, but at a cairn generally located at a natural feature—usually a mountain, hill, pass, or river. The *oboo* ceremony generally accompanies the *naadam* games, which are widely enjoyed recreational events, and, for many, an end in themselves. But at the traditional events of this kind the sporting and social activities follow the ritual of the *oboo* ceremony. The form of the ritual and the personnel involved in the rites carry important symbolic meaning.

The *oboo* was part of what Heissig[44] considers to have been the pre-Buddhist Mongol 'folk religion' (often termed shamanism). It came to be sponsored by the Buddhist system, but was never seen as a strictly Buddhist rite, indeed one of the most senior lamas in pre-revolutionary Inner Mongolia described it as a 'lay ceremony'.[45] Humphrey offers a description of the modern Buryat *oboo*: 'An *oboo* cairn is usually made of earth and stones, with brushwood and flags fluttering from the top. Around the foot lie stones engraved and painted with prayers in Tibetan, coins, bottles, and bones. Most *oboo* sites were thought to be inhabited by spirits of nature, or ancestors.'[46]

In Inner Mongolia the larger *oboo*s are usually more elaborate than the Buryat ones described by Humphrey. The base is made of a pile of stones 2–3m. across and 1m. or so high, and often these have been reinforced with concrete. In the wooden *oboo*s a large number of branches, mostly willow in Hulun Buir, are stuffed into the base and have small flags and rags attached to them. Amongst these branches or stones a single pole which is higher than the rest, called the *gender mod*, is placed. In general the flags will often include printed *hii mor'* ('wind horse')[47] prayer flags, and the *gender mod* will frequently be topped with a brass drop-shaped cap, the *gender* from which the pole gains its name. However, the clan *oboo* that I saw in Barga did not have this, and the fluttering flags were devoid of inscriptions. The willow branches generally had one or more horse-hairs attached, representing the wind horse.

[43] *Obug-a jin takilg-a*, classical transliteration.
[44] Heissig (1980: 103–5).
[45] Hyer and Jagchid (1983: 87).
[46] Humphrey (1983: 422).
[47] *Kei mori*, classical transliteration.



Pl. 9. Participants circle an *oboo* on horseback, Shilingol

The ceremony had been revived since decollectivization, and in many pastoral districts annual *oboo* ceremonies were held, followed by games, usually in the spring or early summer. Although traditionally there were three events, the *eriin gurban naadam*—'Three Manly Sports'[48]—archery, wrestling, and horseracing, in fact archery is almost never practised at these small events. The two remaining sports are still popular, but only wrestling involves all-male competitions. The horses are raced by child-jockeys who are as likely to be girls as boys and some of the large state *naadam*s have introduced female wrestling events. Food is normally prepared by the organizers and distributed. The event has the character of a festival, and the participants usually have a lot of fun.

[48] *Er-e jin gurban nagadum*, classical transliteration.

In general the spiritual entities that are propitiated at the *oboo* are the *gajryn ejed* (the 'masters of the land')[49] and the *luu*s (dragon spirits) associated with water. Forerunners of these *genii locii* have a long history in Mongolian cosmology. As long ago as the thirteenth century there is mention of spiritual 'masters (*ejed*) and rulers of the land and water', who were able to cause the illness of a khan.[50] The concept of local spirits of this kind predates the general introduction of Buddhism to Mongolia, although it is difficult to be certain that they were worshipped at a ritual cairn at that time. Heissig makes use of early Lamaist texts to show that *oboo* rituals date from before the widespread introduction of Buddhism in the sixteenth century, and notes that by the eighteenth century the local spirits worshipped at the *oboo* had been incorporated by the Lamaists into the Buddhist categories of gods, dragons, and the eight classes of lords of land and water, the *nibdag* and *shibdag*.[51] The spirits associated with a given *oboo* and locality have different preferences with respect to offerings. Some, for example the *chagaan luu* (white dragon) should be offered white foods, such as dairy products and rice, not meat or alcohol; while at ceremonies associated with *har luu* ('black' dragon spirits), offerings should include these items.[52] The prayers made at these ceremonies call upon the local spirits for protection from illness, plague, drought, storms, or other adverse weather, cattle-pest, thieves, wolves, and other dangers, and ask for long life, increased herds, and good fortune.[53]

'*Oboo* cults are concerned with nature, particularly rain,' writes Humphrey, of the Buryat case, 'and in the post-war period they have almost lost their Lamaist disguise.'[54] This is not as apparent in Inner Mongolia, however, where the dominant ceremonial discourse continues to conform to the Buddhist interpretation. According to this cosmology, it is held that the *lu*s dwell in the sky, and upon their return to earth they cause rain to fall. In prayers for rain the *lu*s are implored to return to the region that is holding the ceremony. But the rites are not generally held just to bring rain, although

[49] Tatar (1976: 1) describes these as 'master-spirits'. These are usually male entities, often with heroic or magical associations, and some have names, such as *Nogoon Baatar* (*Nogugan Bagatur*, Green Hero). They are considered to have control of the weather in the region and the general natural conditions in the area. The spirits and dragons dwell in natural features such as rivers, woods, lakes, but especially mountains, and the ceremony which is held for a district is often carried out at a local mountain.

[50] In *Secret History* s. 12 (Pelliot 1949: 112) this is transliterated *qajar usun-u äjät qat*, which in Cyrillic Mongolian would be *gazar usany ezed had*. These particular spirits (located in China) were said to have become angry and caused the illness of Ögödei Khan.

[51] See Heissig (1980: 103–5).

[52] The usual Mongolian terms for rice and dairy products both include the word *chagaan* (white), while *har* (black) has been associated with both alcohol (*har arih*) and meat (see *Secret History* s. 167: Cleaves 1980: 91).

[53] Heissig (1980: 105–6); Bawden (1958: 38–9). The early 20th-cent. text of the prayers to be made at an *oboo* quoted by Tatar (1976: 26–33) are very similar to the rites spoken at the *oboo* ceremonies in Inner Mongolia.

[54] Humphrey (1983: 422).

this can happen. I was told that in the summer of 1986 a *sum* in Ordos which had had no rain for several months held a special *oboo* ceremony in order to bring good weather. It was, apparently, immediately successful, and the participants were said to have been soaked by the downpour.[55]

Kabzinska-Stawarz stresses the aspect of reciprocity with nature in her discussion of the *naadam*—the games that accompany the *oboo* ceremony. 'By bringing joy to the Nature [*sic*] and by paying it a tribute in the form of *naadam*, the shepherds anticipated that this special gift be reciprocated.'[56] Reciprocity of this sort is also of central importance in understanding the *oboo* rites. Rather than the *naadam* games, it is the *oboo* ceremony itself, with its offerings, prayers, and explicitly spiritual character, that most fully represents reciprocal relations with the forces of nature.

Before the Chinese Revolution there were *oboo* ceremonies held by the clans, by the *sum* districts, by local monasteries, and by the banner. Vreeland's description of pre-revolutionary Chahar society mentions that the kin-groups of relatives also used the cairns. 'Each *torel* had an *oboo* at which ceremonies were held. There were two such *oboo* near the informant's village, one belonging to the Hangin *torel*, the other to the Borjigit.'[57] Ceremonies in the pre-revolutionary period were more elaborate than those that were revived in the 1980s, often involving other associated rites such as the *seter* and *dallaga*,[58] but the core ritual seems to have been largely retained.

During the 1950s the *oboo* ceremony was forbidden, although it was rumoured to have continued in secret. In the early 1980s the reforms introduced by the new and more liberal Party leadership extended to traditional Mongolian culture and religion. The *oboo* ceremony, along with Lamaism, traditional dress, and other displays of national identity, were tolerated by the state, and even encouraged. One of the first demonstrations of the administration's new liberal attitude towards religion occurred in 1981, when one of the Barga banners in Hulun Buir held an *oboo* ceremony at the annual *naadam* games. This was a classic example of 'leading from the top' by example. Local government often implemented a new policy at regional centres so as to show the peripheral regions what was expected of them. After the banner had shown the way, the *sum* subdistricts felt able to follow.

[55] The spirits of each locality often have individual names, and these differ from place to place. In some cases there are particular myths that explain why an *oboo* was established. In Hulun Buir, to the north of Hailar, there is the famous Amban *oboo*, which used to be the central *oboo* for the eight banners of Hulun Buir and the ceremonies carried out there were attended by banner officials and the *amban*, the Manchu governor. The *oboo* was said to have been established to propitiate the ghost of an 11-year-old boy. The boy came from Hinggan and had to look after the young livestock for a local rich family. Some of these animals were eaten by wolves while in his care, and the owner was so angry that he beat him to death. His ghost caused great trouble in the locality, particularly to the rich owner, and a shaman was called to put the spirit to rest. The shaman placated the ghost by having the *oboo* built.

[56] Kabzinska-Stawarz (1987: 53).

[57] Vreeland (1962: 91).

[58] See Hyer and Jagchid (1983: 90).

Pl. 10. The Sehired clan *oboo*, Shine Barga Left banner

The next year (1982) the *sum*s started to hold *oboo* ceremonies and *naadam* games, and in 1985 the clans in the region began organizing their own ceremonies. There was also a new tolerance of private *oboo* ceremonies. These were sometimes organized by rich herdsmen on the occasion of *nasyn bayar*,[59] a celebration of advanced age, along with attendant games. These events were expensive as they involved the host supplying those who attended with refreshments, giving prizes to the winners of the sporting contests, and buying the offerings for the *oboo*.

The suppression of certain aspects of Mongolian culture in the 1950s and 1960s meant that many came to see Buddhism, the *oboo* ceremony, and other traditional customs as expressions of Mongolian national and cultural

[59] *Nasu-jin bajar*, classical transliteration.

identity. They took pride in their traditions and relished the opportunity of exercising their freedom to practise them. Some of the older participants I knew complained that the young people did not go to *oboo* ceremonies for the spiritual activities at all, but just to have fun at the attendant games. Nevertheless, most of the young Mongolians I talked to valued the entire event as a Mongolian tradition, and in Bayan Gol in the late 1980s attendance was very high, with most herdsmen attending their clan *oboo* ceremony and games, and the ones held by the *sum*.

If possible, a lama would be found to read prayers at the ceremony. It was sometimes difficult to find one, however, as the re-emergence of Buddhism had been a gradual process; the monasteries were so heavily attacked in the 1950s and 1960s that few lamas remained to train younger monks. In the 1980s monasteries reopened in several cities. Shilinhot, the centre of Shilingol *aimag*, had a large and active monastery supported by local government, with a number of young trainee monks. Some of the larger monasteries outside major cities had also begun to revive, such as Badghar monastery near Baotou. Many older Mongolians still consider themselves Buddhist, and photographs of the Panchen lama were a relatively common sight in herdsmen's homes, hanging in the place of honour over the *hoimor*. However, the Buddhist church was only slowly regaining importance, and in the late 1980s it was still difficult to find lamas to officiate at the *oboo* ceremonies, most of them being old men and boys undergoing religious education.

The ceremonies followed a general pattern. On the day of the rite the participants gathered at the base of the hill, or not far away if the *oboo* was not on a rise, at the location where the sports and feasting will later take place. Women are traditionally forbidden to approach the *oboo*, and so they usually stayed at the sports and celebration area with the younger children.

The ritual itself was sometimes held early in the morning, although the ones I attended were conducted at mid-morning. If lamas were present they approached the *oboo* before the majority of the worshippers, and spent some time blessing it. They usually set up a small portable altar in front of the cairn and lit offerings of incense. At one of the ceremonies I attended they also placed a small *balin* (a pyramidal lump of dough made from flour and other ingredients) on the altar as an offering to the spirits. In front of the *oboo* a heaped bowl of offerings was generally placed, typically flat cakes, dried curds, and sweets. The men and boys of the assembly approached the *oboo* and gathered around the lamas as they chanted Tibetan prayers, reading them from religious texts, sometimes accompanying themselves with *honh* (bell) and *damar* (hand drum).[60] As the chanting was in Tibetan rather than

[60] *Xongxu* and *damaru*, classical transliterations. The hand-drum is made from the crowns of two human skulls, each covered to form small drums.

Mongolian, it was incomprehensible to lay participants, but those present later told me that the prayers are taken to be calls on the spirits to accept the offerings and to give blessings to the people gathered to worship. At the Bayan Gol clan ceremonies there were usually no lamas present and then the words of praise and dedication were said in Mongolian by a senior man of the clan.[61] Those present then prayed silently themselves—generally removing their hats and in some cases with motions such as bowing and prostrations. Lubsandorj said that Party members should not pray, although he himself would attend the ceremony as an observer. Sodnom, however, said he certainly did pray, despite being a Party official, and would ask for things he hoped for. Offerings, usually of yoghurt or alcohol (depending on the nature of the local spirits) were thrown onto the *oboo*,[62] and then the assembly filed around the cairn clockwise, three times. As many *oboos* are in steep or rocky locations in these cases this was done on foot, but at one ceremony I attended where the *oboo* was by a lake there was sufficient level ground for the participants to circle on horseback. Some of the edible offerings were taken with the participants who then distributed and consumed them. When the men and boys returned to the sporting area the games could then begin.[63]

The exclusion of women from the actual ceremony, although not from the celebrations or games, is an important characteristic of the *oboo*. Tatar notes a Buryat ceremony very much like that of the *oboo* that did not exclude women, but she does not comment on why women participate in these rites or why they are excluded from other *oboo* ceremonies. Kabzinska-Stawarz notes that in the *naadam* games the sporting contests are celebrations of male strength; women did not traditionally compete in wrestling contests and rarely in archery competitions;[64] correspondingly, mares are not usually entered into the races because they represent feminine powers and are considered weaker than geldings and stallions.[65] She writes, 'The emphasis of the element of strength and the care taken to demonstrate it account for, among other things, such an active participation of men in the games.'[66] This might imply that the *oboo* ceremony also has associations with male virility.

[61] Although I attended district ceremonies, I was unable to witness the more exclusive clan ceremonies in Barga, and had to be content with the descriptions of participants.

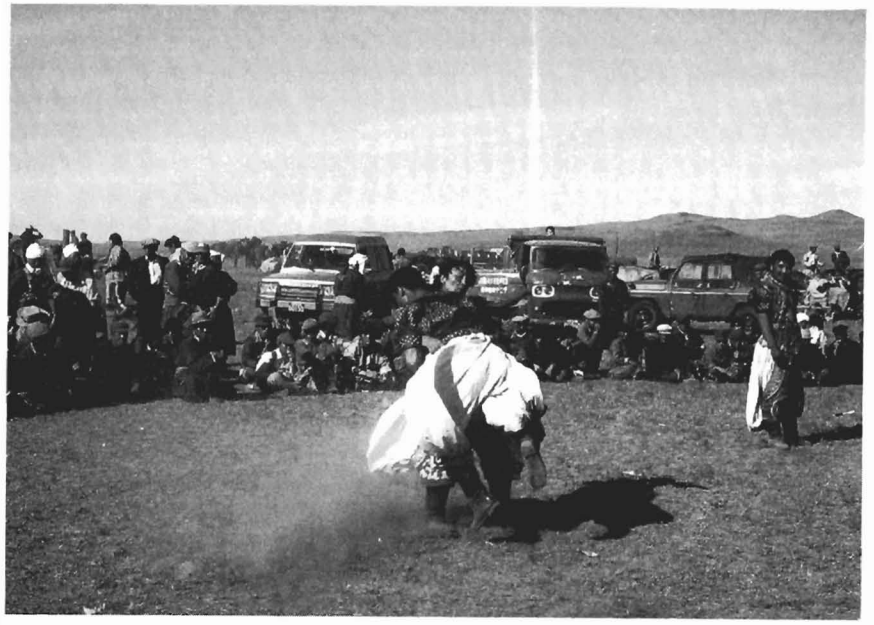
[62] Other offerings were often made at the *oboo*: tea, *hadag* (silk scarves), etc.

[63] In several clans in Bayan Gol the worshippers had started to go to a 'children's *oboo*'. The only historical mention I have found of this is a note by Pozdneyev (1978: 530) in passing. He describes them as set up by children at play; the worship at the *oboo* appears to have been a juvenile version of the adult event. The people of Bayan Gol, however, took the rites at the children's *oboo* more seriously. These *oboos* were said to have been built at a time when the clan had few children, and since then the clan had increased in number. The adults accompany the children to their clan's children's *oboo*, and pray for offspring as the simple rites are conducted. One expert informant told me that from a brief survey of place-names in the rest of Mongolia it appears as if such a children's *oboo* may have been found elsewhere, such as in Dornod *aimag* in Mongolia.

[64] Kabzinska-Stawarz (1987: 63–4), notes that women have competed in archery contests in Mongolia only since 1958 and at games organized centrally by the government.

[65] Ibid. 61.

[66] Ibid. 63.



Pl. 11. Men wrestle at the *naadam* following an *oboo* ceremony, Shilingol

However, in my opinion it is the cultural association of males with religious activity, and formal political matters, rather than virility *per se*, that is more significant in explaining the exclusion of women from the *oboo* ceremony itself. In this sense the all-male participation in the rituals is an expression of the cultural logic that also orders domestic space and places male items in the public, western half of the *ger*.

When the state transformed the larger *naadam* games into official sporting festivals it sought to change the gendered associations of these events, and included female contestants as well as male. Since the 1950s there have been women's archery competitions, and in the 1980s female champions such as Jan Ma were as well known as the males. Women's wrestling was popularized in the early 1980s, using the same *jodog* harnesses as the traditional male Mongolian wrestlers, but worn over a T-shirt. Indeed in the smaller, more usual, *naadam* events the 'three manly sports' are usually reduced to two—wrestling and horse-racing, and the horses are raced by child-jockeys who are as likely to be girls as boys.

I was unable to find a formal justification for the exclusion of women from the *oboo* ceremony. One male informant said that young women would distract the men from their worship, but it was clear that he was searching for some explanation to satisfy my persistent enquiries. Hamayon's work on

Pl. 12. Child jockeys about to set off to the start of the race, Shilingol

Buryat folklore demonstrates that in certain epics menstrual blood is a powerful defiling agent, and it may be that the presence of menstruating women is a threat to the ritual purity of the *oboo*.[67] The participants I spoke to, however, did not explain the prohibition in terms of purity, but said that this was simply the way it had always been done.

There may be a relation between such exclusion and the agnatic nature of exogamous clans. Women of marriageable age have either married in from another clan, or are likely to be lost to another clan sooner or later through marriage. One could reason that in some sense full clan membership is attributed to men and male children. However, women are excluded from the rituals of district *oboo* ceremonies, not only clan ones, and this suggests that the exclusion does not flow directly from agnatic kinship. As Barth suggests, 'we can recognise social statuses as *assets*, and situations as occasions for realising them by enactment'.[68] The *oboo* ceremony, then, can be seen to be at once an expression and a reinforcement of the social status that traditional Mongolian culture assigns to men, that of public and religious figures.

There was at least one attempt to renegotiate these gendered associations through ritual innovation and change the rules so as to allow the participation

[67] Hamayon (1983*b*: 93). [68] Barth (1981: 122).

of women in the *oboo* ceremony. In a nearby *sum* in Shine Barga, the largest clan had organized an *oboo* ceremony committee led by a former *sum* official. The committee had approved a motion that women could participate in the rites. This attempt to create a gender-neutral *oboo* ceremony was, however, the only one that I heard of.

Another example of the way in which religious ritual is located in gendered domains is the role of the *chabganch* female Buddhist devotee. Alongside the revival of the Buddhist clergy in the 1980s, some older women became *chabganch* once again, shaving their heads and wearing brown robes like a lama. Unlike the lama, who is associated with the monastery and public ceremonies, the *chabganch* is usually located in the domestic sphere. She makes her dwelling rich in religious symbolism, usually placing a *burhan* over the *hoimor*, and a little butter-lamp and smouldering incense in front of the *burhan*; she remains part of the family, and is available for minor rituals. In Shine Barga Left banner, for example, a 73-year-old *chabganch* named Pagma kept a small wooden box containing *utlaga*[69] (incense) to make purifying smoke, and a number of *maanyn ürel*[70] (prayer pills) given out by lamas and *gegeen* to worshippers. If one of her grandchildren were sick she would give him or her *maanyn ürel*, or burn the incense to purify the child and *ger*. Many women, particularly the old, perform a number of everyday Buddhist rituals, lighting incense or a lamp in front of *burhan*, and placing there the first helping of the tea that they brew (*chainii deej*).[71]

This is not to say that women act less often than men as lay participants in public worship. At least as many women as men can be seen at the temples, leaving small offerings for the lamas and on the altars before the *burhan* images. Some sew cloth hangings for the temple, and these may be beautifully decorated, often bearing the name of the donor and the date of donation. Not all such offerings are made by the old, either; I was told of a woman in her twenties who had given to the local temple a large hanging of a horse that she had made. All of these activities accumulate blessing—*buyan huraah*[72]—for the supplicant. Chimeg, the wife of Dorj, for example, would usually take some *chagaan idee* ('white food', dairy products) and money when she visited the banner centre, so that she could give them as offerings at the nearby temple. She would also go to the sacred springs from which the temple gains its name (Arshan), and fill some plastic containers with the water to bring back for the rest of the family. This spring-water was well known as a general tonic and a good treatment for various ailments such as headaches and sore eyes.

[69] *Utulg-a*, classical transliteration.
[70] *Mani-jin yril*, classical transliteration.
[71] *Cai-jin degezi*, classical transliteration.
[72] *Bujan xurijaxu*, classical transliteration.

Human Relations with Spirits

As discussed in Ch. 6, gifts are also extremely important in establishing amicable relationships with strangers, their power to create an obligation on the part of the recipient makes them a very useful method of establishing good relations with officials, or others in positions of power.[73] The types of objects that are typically offered to spirits (milk-products, alcohol, butter, sweets) are also considered the best foods and most suitable for guests. There is also another category of exclusively religious offerings. Certain objects are given only to spirits and deities; these include the dough *balin* that may be offered at ceremonies carried out by lamas both in temples and at *oboos*, and the incense- and butter-lamps lit before the *burhan* images in homes and temples. These items are usually used by lamas and worshippers at Buddhist temples, but the bulk of the offerings made by the herdsmen at *oboo* ceremonies are not of this type, but are the same kind of valued status presents as given to other pastoral households. These specialist religious offerings, then, tend to be associated with the Buddhist sanga, and are not an indispensable part of the propitiation of spirits carried out at the *oboo* or in the token domestic oblations carried out when drinking or eating.[74] Certain highly valued commodities are associated with rituals of offering: butter and alcohol, for instance. When a new jar of butter is opened it is customary to throw a drop onto the hearth, and when the first cup of alcohol is poured the ritual flicking of a few drops is traditional and frequently observed. These habitual customs, although carried out without any explicit dedication to deities, were considered to be offerings to spirits, although opinion differed on exactly which spirits these were.

All such offerings employ symbolic logic to place spirits, and the natural forces they control, under an obligation to reciprocate and favour the worshippers. It symbolically draws the spiritual and natural worlds into the social system of reciprocal obligation. As Leach writes, 'If I give you a present you will feel morally bound to give something back. In economic terms you are in debt to me, but in communicative terms the sense of reciprocal obligation is an expression of a mutual feeling that we both belong to the same social system.'[75] The importance of this logic of obligation in Mongolian culture is evidenced by proverbs, such as *hünii yumig absan hün gar jöölön*, *hünii yumyg idsen hün am jöölön*.[76] Loosely translated this would read, 'someone who had

[73] See Humphrey (1983: 436) on the importance of the gift and counter-gift in Mongolian culture as a means of social communication.
[74] The autobiography of the Kanjurwa Khutughtu indicates that in the pre-revolutionary period these offerings were not obligatory, and were carried out at formal meals. See Hyer and Jagchid (1983: 104, 97).
[75] Leach (1976: 6).
[76] The literal meaning would be, 'The person who takes another's things has tender/soft hands, the person who eats another's food has a tender/soft mouth' ('Kymyn-y yaguma-i abugsan kymyn gar zogelen, kymyn-y yaguma-i idegsen kymyn ama zogelen', classical transliteration). There is also an almost identical saying in Chinese, see Yang (1994: 197).

things from another has gentle hands, someone who accepts another's food speaks well of them'. The obligation of reciprocity is clear, and its application to the spiritual sphere is demonstrated by another saying, *Burhan baital balingaar bayasna*—'even a buddha is happy to receive an offering'.[77]

It may be rather too neat to describe human relations with the spirits to be one of patronage, as a complement to economic and political arrangements, but there is a sense in which a single logic informs all these areas. Since neo-feudal times the Mongolian herding household has relied on good relations with local government to authorize the use of pastureland; and on good relations with his neighbours, kin, and employer if he has one, for the use of certain resources—such as transportation, and for support in times of crisis. He seeks long-standing links with all these agencies, personalizing the relationship and building loyalty and obligation into these bonds. Where status differences are marked this leads to a certain type of association which is analogous to a clientelistic relationship. The herdsman maintains these links using a symbolic repertoire including ceremonial exchange and hospitality.

A herding family also relies upon nature for the survival of its animals and their livelihood. In seeking good relations with the spiritual agencies that control the otherwise unpredictable phenomena of weather, disease, and fortune, traditional Mongolian culture utilizes the same model of social relations found in human affairs. Long-standing links with the spirit world are marked by the position of, and offerings to, the *burhan* images as permanent honoured guests and members of the household, and the spiritual masters of land and water are treated in an way analogous to honoured superiors at *oboo* ceremonies. Another example of the single logic that informs both social and spiritual orders is the concept of *ejen* (master or owner). Just as the term is used to mean the position of authority of the head of the household, since the thirteenth century the human polity, the *ulus*, was conceived of as having an *ejen*—a master or head. The principle of proprietorship extended to land and water which had spiritual masters in traditional cosmology. In a mobile pastoral culture, where the link between people and territory was more flexible than in sedentary society, temporal rulers had jurisdiction primarily over their human subjects, and only secondly over land and water, which had its own spiritual masters. It would be far too reductionist to follow Marx in analysing religion as merely an illusory representation of social relations, but it is worth noting the striking parallels between the social and spiritual hierarchy.[78]

[77] The offering mentioned is a *balin* (made of dough). In the classical script this would be written *burxan baitala baling-ijar bajsna*.

[78] For this type of approach see Godelier (1977*b*: 4, 177).

The Social Dynamics of the Oboo *Ceremony*

One of the most easily understood aspects of the *oboo* ceremony is that the variety of different *oboos* at which rites and games were held represented the overlapping social categories that existed in pastoral Inner Mongolia. Some of the different social identities of the individual concerned were represented by the ceremonies they could attend as members of a clan, the *sum*, and the larger administrative units of the banner and *aimag*. This was also true of administrative units: representatives of the *sum* were expected to attend the banner ceremony, even in the period of the revival of the practice in the 1980s. When the *aimag* (league) held a *naadam* the banner representatives and delegations from the leading factories in the region would attend and might make offerings. Clearly these huge events had a role different from the smaller ceremonies, with a heavily political character; however they did retain the function of showing and stressing membership, in this case membership of the *aimag* administrative district.

But the various local institutions of pastoral districts were part of a wider and more complicated process of politics (in the broadest sense). This becomes clearer with the realization that these groups could not be analysed as if they were solitary units. Institutions such as clans only existed as units in the context of certain issues, such as descent. Both Lubsandorj and his arch-enemy Sodnom, for example, were members of the Sharnuud clan, and attended the clan *oboo* ceremony (although Lubsandorj did not pray). They were also, both members of the Party, but of bitterly opposed factions. If one wanted to draw a social map of Bayan Gol *sum,* one would place Sodnom and Lubsandorj as members either of the same or of opposing groups, depending upon which contexts were referenced. It is certainly too simple to argue, as Barth has, 'the solidarity of groups springs from the advantages which persons obtain from being members',[79] but common interests can help explain the importance of certain contexts for groups and institutions such as the Party, factions, and clans.

In Bayan Gol there were a number of different potential and actual interest groups,[80] most of them overlapping. Some of the more obvious ones were the Party, the clans, the Women's Association, *gachaa* members, herdlords, the poor, and state officials. Others were less formal but were no less important, such as the position of those involved in past political movements

[79] Barth (1959: 19). Barth (1981: 47) utilizes this approach with the concept of transaction, which is concerned with 'persons who engage in social activity with a view to obtaining something of value' and which 'shows the compounded effects which multiple independent actors have on each other'.

[80] In sociology the term 'interest groups' is generally taken to mean 'organizations representing particular interests' and sociologists such as McKenzie (1969: 341–3) prefer the term to the label 'pressure group', to denote 'organized groups possessing both formal structure and real common interests'. But my use of the term is different, and results from an attempt to understand 'small-scale' social processes of pastoral communities. It means a social group with a common interest.

notably the campaign against the Nei Ren Dang. Other interest groups activated temporarily over their particular issue—such as land disputes—but became latent again after that. One way in which this activation can occur is through highlighting an issue with respect to which a given category of people share a common interest—for example the re-examination of the cases of those condemned as members of the Nei Ren Dang. With respect to this issue a latent interest group (the condemned) becomes an actual one. This solidarity would resurface among Dorj's friends, for example, when the conversation moved to this topic, which was one reason why it often did.

Ritual, with its explicit and implicit management of meaning, can also serve to reference certain contexts, and the constituencies concerned with them—such as the formal meetings of the Party or Women's Association, for example. This can also be seen at the *oboo* ritual. At the district ceremony the rites are carried out in honour of the local *gajryn ejen*, spiritual 'masters of the land'; in order to retain good relations with them. Clan ceremonies serve to create a context in which joint descent is the central issue, and the rites identify the interests of clan members, in that prayers are said for the benefit of the worshippers. They request health, wealth, and many children. The *sum* ceremony rites serve to reference one of the most important contexts in which the district's people are united—residence. Bitterly divided on other issues though they might be, in this sense all the *sum*'s residents share a common interest in retaining good local conditions and therefore positive relations with the local spirits. Even if an individual such as Lubsandorj does not really believe that good fortune may depend upon relations with spirits, he attends the ceremony as a token of his membership of the *sum* or clan community.

In Bayan Gol the clans had no formal leader or head, but there was only the rotating position of *nyarab* (*nirba*), treasurer, for the *oboo* ceremony and games. This mutual investment by all clan members increased the joint interest they had in making the ceremony a success. The same process can be seen at work in the *nasyn bayar* age celebration ceremonies held at the *oboo*. If an old herdsman or his family and friends wish to 'activate' the context in which the old man is central and important to many people, having the *nasyn bayar* at an *oboo* is an excellent way to do so. The ceremony itself demonstrates a certain public-spiritedness and concern for the local community and natural order, and the whole event demonstrates his wealth, popularity, and social power, as well as providing rewards for those participating—food, drink, and sport. Although this need not be a competitive display, it can be. Hamayon's work on the Buryat Geser epic notes this type of behaviour as an element in folklore. One version of the epic describes two opposing deities (the leaders of the eastern *Tenger* and the western *Tenger*) organizing rival celebrations in order to gain prestige and attract an important ally.[81]

[81] Hamayon (1983*a*: 389).

The gatherings themselves do not create solidarity through some sort of Durkheimian 'social effervescence', nor are the spirits worshipped simply totemic symbols of the group itself—they are spiritual authorities that participants have an interest in retaining good relations with. The clan can be seen as using the *oboo* ceremony to create a context by which it can activate and reactivate itself. The political authorities of the *sum* and banner make use of this event to symbolize the unity of their communities in a similar way. At a wider level, of course, *oboo* ceremonies also reference the context of shared Mongolian cosmological and cultural heritage, making the rites an expression of national as well as local identity.

The recent efforts to introduce a gender-neutral *oboo* ceremony attended by both men and women reflect the impact of the state's efforts to reshape public space and notions of group membership. In particular they reflect the notion that women's participation in the formal political arena should be in person, and not mediated through males.

Symbols and Social Order

Mongolian pastoral communities have been hierarchically constituted for much of their history. Notions of jurisdiction and authority have been fundamental to both political and spiritual belief systems; both depend upon the concept of the *ejen,* and both are represented in the *oboo* ceremony where the temporal authorities draw residents together in honour of the spiritual ones. Certain aspects of kinship relations provide a model for hierarchy, and domestic organization is informed by traditional concepts of social order. This structured series of domestic relationships has long been part of the Mongolian pastoral culture, and in the pre-revolutionary period also served as something of a model for the wider organization of society. The economic and religious spheres were inextricably linked to the same cultural system that informed kinship, the ordering of domestic space, and a normative order expressed through ceremony.

As Gellner puts it, 'The Durkheimian hypothesis that the prime role of ritual is the instilling of important concepts, and that is what endows a community with its shared ideas and obligations, deserves the greatest respect. In this sense, every concept has and *is* a ritual.'[82] The Mongolian symbolic system that informs ritual, then, can be seen to be a conceptual framework that also influences social organization. In the economic arrangements of Mongolian herding families the household head has managerial responsibility for a wide range of activities. The symbolic and ritual language of the culture expresses and enshrines this social organization by marking relative social status. The concept of the *ejen* has not lost its power as a principle of social

[82] Gellner (1988*a*: 274).

organization, despite the collectivized era. In the egalitarian ideology of the People's Communes the *gertiin ejen* (head of the household) was theoretically just another worker. However, the Mongolian cultural system afforded the position ceremonial and symbolic importance, and these constructs were enacted throughout the period. Indeed, the pastoral work of the communes was largely carried out through the household as a unit, so that the traditional roles of its members were never revolutionized in the way that class relations were. When livestock was divided between households in the 1980s, the position of household head regained its nascent role as manager of family property.

The west to east ranking of the encampment represents the relative economic responsibilities of the members as well as status ranking. The head of the westmost *ger* is expected to have the greatest role in decision-making, whilst the youngest son's household would nominally at least have the least. If the encampment included a family employed by the patron then its *ger* would customarily take up the eastmost position, reflecting its subordinate status in the organization of work. By way of a conclusion, then, the Mongolian symbolic and ritual repertoires are not only a vocabulary which expresses the reality of pastoral social organization, but a set of structuring concepts which have shaped modern Inner Mongolia in the face of recent economic change.

9

Conclusion

In the attempt to provide a synoptic account of the results of forty years of revolutionary social engineering on pastoral Inner Mongolia society, it is helpful to review briefly the political and economic processes that have framed this period of social change.

Society and the State

As was detailed in Ch. 3, Mongolian society was subject to violent reorganization by the powerful new Chinese communist state. The aristocracy and sanga were removed, and in the first few years of communist rule there was a redistribution of wealth. Inner Mongolia saw factionalism develop within the new administration, both between the left and right of the Party, and between Tümed and east Mongolian cadres. Ulanhu's administration reflected his own rightist political style and his Tümed background, but he was unable to block Maoist policies of the Great Leap Forward. However, after the GLF had been discredited, Ulanhu was quick to reverse some of the policies most detrimental to Mongolian interests. When Mao unleashed the Cultural Revolution Ulanhu's local power base at first resisted the attacks of the radicals, but eventually the Maoist centre intervened to remove him and establish military control of the region.

The post-Maoist period saw the rehabilitation of the architect of the IMAR. Ulanhu's son Buhe became chairman of the regional government in 1983, and several of his other children, by two marriages, gained high positions in the region. Buhe, however, was never allowed to wield as much power as his father. As chairman of IMAR he demonstrated the special place of the Mongolian nationality in the administration of the region, and reflected the Party's newfound policy that the head of the local government of an autonomous region should be of the indigenous nationality. But the position was thought of as having more symbolic than political importance. Much of the real power in the region was wielded by the first secretary of the Communist Party and since the fall of Ulanhu this post has always been held by a Han Chinese.

Inner Mongolian politics continue to reflect the region's recent history, including the rivalry between those (such as Ulanhu) with an agenda linked to specifically Mongolian interests, and their opponents who gave a lower priority to assisting 'minority' nationalities.

From around 1985–7 the Party head and *de facto* leader of the administration was Zhang Shuguang. Zhang was associated with the reform-minded wing of the Party, and was rumoured to have good relations with the then Party general secretary Hu Yaobang who, along with Deng Xiaoping and Zhao Ziyang, was one of the architects of the post-Maoist period of reform.[1] Zhang placed special emphasis on supporting pastoralism in the region, and in early 1986 he launched a vision for the future named (in Chinese) *da mu ye* the 'great pastoral economy'. For Zhang this economy included pastoralism, forestry, and (in a supporting role) agriculture. The new policy had two sets of eight-word Chinese slogans; 'nian cao mu jing, xing xu mu ye', 'chant the doctrine of grass and tree, develop the pastoral economy', and 'lin mu wei zhu, duo zhong jing ying', 'forestry and pastoralism should be central, manage various types of economy'.

These initiatives benefited pastoral regions, which received increased investment from the Agricultural Bank of China, and boosted local government budgets. This generated a climate of optimism among many Mongolians. Most rural Mongolian regions are classified as pastoral or semi-pastoral districts, and stood to gain from the various programmes. More importantly, perhaps, the pastoral economy was seen as symbolic of Mongolian interests in general. The attitude of Zhang and Buhe suggested a senior place for the Mongolian nationality in their own Autonomous Region.

Around 1987 Zhang was replaced as first secretary of the Communist Party in IMAR by Wang Qun. Again, this was seen by some as a reflection of changes in Beijing. Hu Yaobang had been replaced as general Party secretary by Zhao Ziyang, and Wang Qun was seen as one of Zhao Ziyang's men. Policy began to change again, reflecting the new leadership's priority of rapid economic development. Wang introduced a new policy which retained one of the four-word couplets of the previous administration, 'yin di zhi yi, duo zhong jing ying', 'adapt to the particular local situation, manage various types of economy'. This apparently subtle change had important implications, and seemed to mark a reverse of the earlier promotion of Mongolian interests. Wang's administration favoured various economic acivities such as commerce, mining, and small-scale industry, which were seen as primarily Han domains. This represented a loss in the high priority that Mongolian regions and officials had enjoyed. As usual, plenty of published literature appeared to justify the new policies and praise the new approach.

In 1992 Buhe was replaced by a new chairman, Ölzii, an eastern Mongolian. In the new climate the importance of the Tümed cadres diminished, as did the number of senior officials with Ulanhu's original clan name

[1] One of Hu Yaobang's associates was a Jirem Mongolian, Altan-Ochir, who was said to have been a classmate of Hu's in Moscow in the 1930s. Altan-Ochir rose to become vice-secretary of the Central Chinese Communist Youth League, and in the late 1980s he became vice-chairman of the IMAR government.

of Yün. A year or two later Wang Qun was replaced as Party chief by Liu Ming-zhu, resulting in the re-examination of some of the policies of the previous administration But the attitude of the administration towards the Mongolian nationality has continued to disappoint many Mongolians, and pastoralists have found that the prices of animal products has failed to keep up with the costs of many other goods.

In conclusion it is worth noting that the swings in local government policy in the region were dictated by the interaction of the central and local government power structures and the factions within them. Local policy was dictated more by the needs of factions within the administration than by local circumstances. Recent Inner Mongolian history is also the story of state economic policy with little reliable feedback as to the results of its initiatives, and without any real internal incentive to obtain it, or act on it. The gap that developed between the ideology of what was 'supposed to be happening' and what actually was happening, reached its peak in the Great Leap Forward described in Ch. 3. The ludicrous claims of success made a stark contrast to the reality of economic disaster. It is clear that this characteristic of the administration has not been eradicated by post-Maoist political reform. The tendency has been described by Longworth and Williamson as the 'policy mirage' syndrome, and they note that divergence between official policy and reality has flourished in recent years.[2] It is likely to hamper Inner Mongolia's efforts to develop its economy in the future.

We see throughout the period studied, and as much in evidence today, a society subject to a political hierarchy where the lines of communication coincide with the linkages of power. Even when independent information about the activities of officials is reliably passed up to their superiors, it is not generally in their interests to receive disappointing reports. Although the dissolution of the communes brought a very real degree of economic independence to pastoral producers, attained by the return to the household of some limited autonomy, the political system remains a command structure that reaches right down to the domestic unit, and continues to direct it. At the same time, however, local officials have developed considerable skill at furthering their own interests by portraying them as implementation of state policy, and this gives a measure of practical independence at the local level, despite the formal control of the centre.

Political Economy and the State

Economic reform was at the heart of the Chinese state's programme of socialist transformation. The Maoist administration came to view the number of livestock as an indicator of the success of reform in the pastoral sector. The

[2] Longworth and Williamson (1993: 321–2).

total number of livestock in Inner Mongolia rose dramatically in the early years of the communist administration of the region, as described in Ch. 3. At least part of this rise was due to the recovery of the pastoral economy after the ravages of war. Unsurprisingly it was the numbers of the fast-breeding species, sheep and goats, that increased most rapidly and one of the results of this was that when herd numbers began to level off in the early 1960s there was a higher proportion of these 'small' animals than in pre-communist times. Livestock totals reached 30m. in the early 1960s, and have remained at around this level since. The chaos and persecution of the Cultural Revolution seems to have caused a slight depression in herd numbers, but a far from dramatic one. There appears to have been a greater impact on the environment, as huge areas of land were damaged by badly planned agricultural projects and apparent overgrazing. Since the rural reforms of the 1980s the new administration has become increasingly concerned with allocating pastureland to individual households, in an attempt to prevent further damage. There is a growing weight of evidence that suggests that these policies are exacerbating the problem of pasture degradation,[3] and it remains to be seen if the current policy will be successful in the long run.

The post-Maoist Chinese leadership has swung state policy away from communalism and towards a new accommodation with the domestic unit. Rather than trying to re-engineer micro-economic and interpersonal relations by means of the bureaucratic structure of the People's Communes, the reform policies returned property and a level of autonomy to the household; and a level of authority to its head. This was justified in terms of practicality household responsibility simply allowed for a more efficient and productive economic system. It was also popular.

This decollectivization resulted in larger incomes for pastoral families in the 1980s, largely as a result of rising prices for their products. It does seem that the standard of care for livestock has improved, as the government claims, and pastoral productivity increased. Herd totals, after falling slightly, increased to record levels in the 1990s as pastoralists sought the security of large herds. The other result of reform, less palatable for the government, was the growth in material inequality between pastoral families. The newly emerged rich began to organize and employ the labour of some poorer herding households. This form of social organization, however, was not new to Inner Mongolia, and bears some comparison with pre-revolutionary forms.[4] The economic patronage relations that can link rich herdsmen and their hired helpers is an important, but not necessarily the most important, manifestation of patronage in the region. The networks around officials also tend to function like patron–client relations, and they remain an intrinsic part of day-

[3] See Williams (1996: 307–33); Sheehy (1993: 17–30); Sneath (1998: 1147–8)

[4] It should be noted that these relations seem increasingly likely to be formal monetary arrangements; in 1993 typical wages paid for herding work were between 1,000 and 2,000 yuan a year.

to-day life. These private arrangements often supply official support and resources to those in the network. It is this tendency that has helped generate the new wealthy pastoral élite, frequently composed of former officials and their families and friends.

At the top of local government this trend was graphically demonstrated by the senior positions that were held by Ulanhu's children. Buhe became chairman of IMAR, Ulanhu's other sons gained high office, such as heading the Baotou and Ulaanhad city administrations, whilst his daughter became head of the Autonomous Region's medical organization. In the late 1980s a large number (estimated by informants at 200 or more) of the more senior officials in the administration were of Ulanhu's clan, bearing the name Yün. Many important posts were held by other Tümed Mongolians from Ulanhu's home area near Hohhot. Although the fortunes of this once powerful network have now been eclipsed, the promotion of family and friends was, and still is, a tendency throughout the administration, so that the patronage network spreads outwards from those in powerful positions.

The same tendency is found among petty officials in pastoral regions. At the level of the rural district the benefits that can be distributed by cadres are not usually posts in local government, but rather access to equipment, facilities, good pasture, and bank loans. The recipients of such benefits may become rich employers of labour, and so patrons in their own right with respect to their hired hands. It is through these processes, rather than corruption, that much of the new élite has gained privileged access to political and material resources.

The question that still concerns those responsible for pastoral development in IMAR is bound to be 'How can production be raised further?' With respect to meat production the short answer is for the Mongolians to eat less meat and sell more. Something like half the annual herd increase is consumed by the herding families themselves. As this portion of the diet would have to be made up for by an increase in the amount of agricultural produce they would eat, such a development would not be a very appealing one to most pastoralists, who enjoy their traditional meat-rich diet.

While with capitalist producers one can expect to see a higher price stimulate higher production, it seems that Inner Mongolian pastoralists react very differently to market fluctuations. The Mongol herdsmen I knew all wanted to increase the size of their herds. They would sell fewer animals if the price was high enough for them to satisfy their needs for consumer goods with fewer sales. Low prices, on the other hand, would force them to sell more animals to make ends meet. In this respect Ingold's distinction between capitalists and pastoralists is particularly useful: 'Pastoralists sell to realise a target income, defined by domestic needs,'[5] while the capitalist will increase

[5] Ingold (1980: 231–2)

production in response to price rises. On the other hand, wool and cashmere, which can be sold without reducing the number of livestock, are not subject to the same reasoning. As the price of cashmere rose, Inner Mongolian herders responded by increasing the proportion of goats in their flocks (up to a point), and producing more cashmere.[6] It seems likely that beyond this sort of change, increasing the rate of commercialization of pastoral products will depend upon the emerging élite of rich herdsmen. If they begin to act as small capitalist producers they could sell a higher proportion of their total herds, and by paying their employees in cash cause them to eat less meat. On the other hand, if they act as Ingold's ideal-typical pastoralist, they will tend to sell only as many animals as they must to support the traditional, pastoral 'good life'.

The emergence of rich and poor in pastoral Inner Mongolia raises the question of to what extent pastoral economies have a tendency to limit material inequality. Barth's study of the Basseri pastoral nomads of south Persia presents us with one mechanism for reducing differences in wealth within a pastoral society – the sedentarization of the richest and poorest sections of Basseri society. He argues that it is the form of capital and management constraints that 'maintain a general economic homogeneity among the nomads, both by inhibiting the concentration of pastoral wealth, and by a constant elimination through sedentarisation of the top and bottom of the economic spectrum'.[7]

In the Basseri case Barth argues that the poorest sections of nomadic society become impoverished and move to villages and towns in search of work. Pastoralists who become rich, on the other hand, tend to buy out of nomadic society by acquiring land. Barth writes:

> The possibility of investment in agricultural land is always present. I should emphasise that sedentarisation is never regarded as an ideal among the nomads; they value their way of life more highly than life in the village. But the economic advantages of land purchase are palpable: the risk of capital loss is eliminated, the profits to an absentee landowner large, and they are in the form of products useful in a nomadic household.[8]

Generally, however, once an investment in land has been made, the owner tends to settle down so as to manage it better. This makes for an interesting comparison with the situation in Inner Mongolia, where in a few instances there is a comparable tendency among some rich herdsmen to buy a restaurant or small business in the town as an investment. However, there are a number of constraints that prevent the emergence of a sedentarization pattern similar to that described by Barth.

The primary constraints are legal and administrative. It is not technically possible for individuals to buy or sell agricultural land in the People's

[6] See Longworth and Williamson (1993: 87). [7] Barth (1964: 78–9). [8] Ibid. 77.

Republic of China. Indeed vehicles, agricultural machinery, and small service-sector businesses are among the few avenues open for capital investment apart from livestock, and the pastoral élite do seem to be making good use of these limited investment opportunities. But it takes a very wealthy herdsman to be able to buy a small business in an urban centre, and as it is not necessarily sure to prosper, it is not as attractive an investment as farming land appears to have been for the Basseri. Furthermore, the government encourages investment in the pastoral sector through low-interest bank loans, so that buying trucks, grass-cutting machinery, tractors, and animal shelters are generally the most attractive investment opportunities for the pastoral élite. With ready access to bank accounts, however, the modern Inner Mongolian rich herdsman may also safeguard some capital without investing it.

Another fundamental constraint, especially with regard to the poor in pastoral regions, is that in Inner Mongolia the rural population is not allowed to settle where it pleases. Permits (*hukou*) are required for rural residents to live and work in a town or another agricultural area. Although the cities are predominantly Han Chinese, many Mongolians are eager to make use of higher education to earn them the opportunity of living in the cities, but this is one of the few means by which they can attain this goal. In many cases there would be no jobs for the pastoral poor even if they were permitted to relocate to urban areas. Instead they form a pool of potential labour for richer households, and the destitute do receive some welfare benefits from the local government in their home area.

Barth also describes the other mechanisms that inhibit the concentration of wealth in pastoral Basseri society. It is interesting to note these so as to make a more general comparison with the Inner Mongolian case. He lists them as: 'accidental capital losses' (livestock may be killed in large numbers by harsh climatic conditions), 'differential consumption rates and the diversion of labour from pastoral production' (rich households consume more and work less), 'accelerated division of household and capital' (rich families do not have to save up for a long time to be able to afford bride-price, so the sons can marry, and inherit their share of the family herds, early), 'polygyny and increased family size without corresponding reduction in the inheritance shares of the sons'[9] (rich men tend to have several wives, which increases consumption, and their eldest sons often get married and inherit large shares of the herds whilst the younger wives are still producing children).

In the PRC today it is illegal to practice polygyny. However, most of the other factors that Barth lists as inhibiting the concentration of the ownership of large numbers of animals are applicable to the Inner Mongolian situation. The possibility of losing large numbers of animals in a bad winter is considerable, but generally the richer the herdsman is, the better his chance of keeping his

[9] Ibid. 76.

losses low. Winter shelters for animals and a large store of hay can do much to offset the worst effects of natural disaster. Secondly, rich households do consume more than poor ones, but they do not necessarily consume a greater proportion of their total income. Poor pastoral households have to expend almost their entire income on subsistence, whilst a rich household often consumes less than its total income, leaving a surplus for reinvestment, or for herd-growth.

The general pattern of Basseri livestock inheritance is remarkably similar to the traditional Mongolian one. Each son inherits a share of the herd upon his marriage. But in contrast, a substantial bride-wealth is not usually given in Inner Mongolian pastoral society. However, the total cost of marriage is still a very considerable expense for a herding household, and this does suggest that rich families could afford to marry their children early. In practice, however, the sons of poor herdsmen do not necessarily marry later. They tend to share the *ger* with their parents until they can afford a dwelling of their own, rather than delay their marriage. This conserves wealth in the household as a whole. So far the nature of legal and administrative constraints has generated different patterns of capital investment in Inner Mongolia from those of the Basseri. If, however, the Chinese government eventually extends the freedom of the market, so that investment in land becomes possible, it seems likely that the richer section of the pastoral élite would take advantage of any secure and profitable investment opportunities that arose.[10]

The dissolution of the People's Communes and distribution of property in the 1980s provided the opportunity for an experimental examination of the nature of a pastoral economy, in that households started with what was theoretically an equal share of livestock and access to land. However, under the prevailing political conditions, rich and poor emerged within a few years. This poses the question as to why wealth differentials appeared so rapidly and seemed so stable, and the explanation involves both economic and ideological processes.

The Economic Basis of Hierarchy

To begin with a simplified model of the development of material inequality, we can presume that a pastoral economy operating under the following constraints is likely to produce a similar pattern. (1) Ownership of animals is inherited by the family unit. (2) Herd numbers fluctuate with natural conditions which vary over time and space. (3) There are no countervailing systems to prevent the concentration of the ownership of animals.[11] (4) Preferential access to resources depends upon durable relations with officials or other authorities who control the means of coercion.

[10] It should be added, however, that the traditional Mongolian dislike of agricultural work is still widely felt among pastoral Mongolians today (although not among the many farming Mongolians in Jirem and other agricultural parts of IMAR). It is widely held that farming is much harder work than herding, and few pastoralists would take up agriculture unless forced to. It is as an investment that rich Mongolian pastoralists might consider buying land, if it was permitted. This would not mean working on it themselves but collecting rent from those who farmed the soil, as many princes did in pre-revolutionary Inner Mongolia.

Under these conditions it is logical to expect that there will develop an unequal ownership of livestock. First, herding is an uncertain business and not every family will be successful at it. Secondly, there is likely to be inequitable access to fodder and good grazing land, because some individuals have greater influence with the authorities than others. As a result there will develop in any normal population a varying distribution of animals. Some families will tend to have too few animals for their subsistence. The richest families are eventually likely to accumulate too many animals for their domestic labour to manage and will need to employ extra labour. It is also logical that the poorest families will need the material support such work brings, and that in a small, intimate community such relations will be multiplex in character. These will tend to involve an exchange of a variety of goods and services, and may come to reflect status differences. Such constraints existed in Inner Mongolia before the collectivization of herding, and exist again today, to some extent, as a result of the rural reforms. Once established, the pattern of ownership tends to persist because the livestock holdings of the rich, 'leased out' to different client herders, are less liable to fall below the minimum viable level, and because the rich are more likely to be well equipped to deal with adverse conditions. The poor, however, are likely to have to consume a greater proportion of their herds for subsistence than those with large holdings of livestock, making accumulation more difficult.

Configurations of Dependency and Pastoral Feudalism

Are there connections between the pre-revolutionary feudal order and the forms of political and pastoral dependency described above and in earlier chapters? In his paper 'Patrons and Clients',[12] Ernest Gellner asks the question, 'Is patronage a feudalism manqué? Or is feudalism patronage sanctified

[11] One of the conditions of this model was the absence of a system to prevent the concentration of ownership of livestock. It could be argued that in pre-revolutionary Mongolian society the Lamaist system acted as a redistributive mechanism. The rich made donations to the monasteries which were used to support monks and *shabinar*. However, it is not the redistribution of animal products but the ownership of the animals themselves that concerns me here. As Natsagdorj (1967: 279) notes, both lay and monastic herd-owners leased out livestock to poorer client families, although the monasteries tended to be more favourably inclined towards the poor. The conditions of this traditional *sureg* lease of livestock was usually that the client gained animal products but not the ownership of the animals themselves. In the cases when the client was paid with a proportion of the increase of the herd, most of these animals would often have to be consumed or sold for subsistence, making it difficult for the poor to accumulate animals. Secondly, in the case of animal loss through natural disaster, the client often had to make up the numbers of the leased animals from his own livestock. These factors helped the rich accumulate the ownership of large numbers of animals.

[12] Gellner (1977: 1–6).

by ritual stability and overt recognition?' In the case of pre-revolutionary Mongolia, the answer to this question is that the feudal political system can be seen as a formal and stabilized version of the forms of pastoral dependency which served as its basis.

Pre-revolutionary Mongolian society was characterized by a formal political hierarchy of statuses, in which a ruling aristocracy administered commoner subjects on behalf of a central authority. From the seventeenth to the twentieth century this central authority was the Qing emperor.[13] As well as this formal structure, however, there was another form of dependency, based on pastoral rather than political principles. Rich commoners (as well as nobles and ecclesiastical authorities) had their livestock herded for them by poorer households, some of them kin, either by leasing out herds in traditional *süreg* arrangements, or by including them in the *hot-ail* encampment. These relations involved the extension of the principles of domestic organization to the client households, as seen in the spatial organization of the *hot-ail*.

The status ranking of the Mongolian feudal political structure mirrored the categories generated by the pastoral economy in the model outlined above, so that one could almost conceive of the formal hierarchy as enshrining, formalizing, and accentuating the pastoral inequalities described by that model. The position of the noble corresponds with that of the rich patrons whose livestock was herded for them by their servants and personal serfs, who filled the role of clients. The common subjects owed obligations of service and produce to their lords, but their position was otherwise comparable to that of self-sufficient pastoralists. Rather than aberrations created by incorporation into the Qing state, these three basic socio-economic positions can be seen as stable and entirely pastoral developments.

It is widely held that Mongolian feudalism was formalized under the Manchus in the seventeenth century, but the origins of this structure stretch back at least as far as the Chinggisid empire, and can be found in the political order described in *The Secret History of the Mongols*. How did Mongolian feudalism come about ? There are no historical sources that can definitively answer this question, but I think that we can make some educated guesses. A Mongolian aristocracy appears to have arisen some time before the thirteenth century, indeed a steppe nobility appears to have existed as long ago as the Hsiung-nu polity of the third century BC,[14] and, like the aristocracies of Europe, their emergence seems to be a result of conquest, at least in part.[15] The early lords of the steppe may have gained wealth through war, but the

[13] The Lamaist sanga enjoyed relatively high social mobility, but for the purposes of this discussion I shall leave that topic to one side and concentrate upon lay society.

[14] The 2nd-cent. historian Ssu-ma Ch'ien described the steppe polity in his classic history, the *Shih chi*. From this we know that the Hsiung-nu were ruled by an aristocracy composed of three families. See Barfield (1981: 48).

[15] *The Secret History of the Mongols* records the story of Bodonchar, founder of the Borjigin, who gained his subjects by the conquest of a less hierarchical group of pastoralists. See Cleaves (1982: 8).

model outlined above also suggests that an indigenous economic process could accumulate and retain herd-wealth in the hands of the pastoral élite. If the same constraints that were listed above were present in that pre-feudal society, then an élite that emerged in Mongolia would also have been supported by indigenous social processes that maintained the rich as patrons who could command the labour of poorer, less powerful families.

The Secret History of the Mongols describes the way in which the pastoral élite of pre-Chinggisid Mongolia formed larger political structures within a political tradition that included notions of overlordship.[16] For the vassal noble, allegiance to overlords such as the To'oril Khan of the Kereid, or Chinggis Khan himself, seems to have had the advantages of security in the face of attack, as well as the advantages of unity in either raiding or trading with China – as suggested by Barfield.[17] The size and historical impact of the Chinggisid empire meant that it was better documented than earlier steppe political systems, and these sources suggest that the thirteenth-century Mongol polity was a patrimonial state with most of the characteristics of the later feudalism that developed under the Manchus. Khazanov, however, argues that the social form that emerged from the Chinggisid conquests was 'not nomadic feudalism . . . but a society of another type. In this society the main differences between the key strata and classes consisted not in their relation to key resources, but in their relation to power and government. Those direct obligations which rulers imposed on the ruled were not the cause but the consequence of the emergence of the rulers.'[18]

Khazanov's analysis of the basis of post-Chinggisid Mongolian hierarchy is only incompatible with a particular notion of feudalism, however. He understands feudal society to be a social form based upon the differential relations of social strata to certain resources, in line with Marxist definitions of the term.[19] Khazanov describes the position of the different social strata in the Chinggisid polity as based on their political relations to 'power and government'. This emphasis on the political rather than the economic basis for the position of élites is not at odds, however, with the Weberian concept of feudal society, which noted the political and military basis of this ideal-type. Weber, who applied the term rather widely so as to speak of Japanese,

[16] Such as the Kereid and Naiman polities.

[17] See Barfield (1989). An example of the protection afforded by the Kereid khan in return for fealty is provided by Chinggis Khan himself, who made use of it to revenge himself on the Merkit and Tatars.

[18] See Khazanov (1983: 240).

[19] Lattimore (1962: 546–50) argued that both Chinggisid and Manchu eras led to the feudalization of Mongolia, and points out that Soviet models of feudalism were very different from Western ones. He rejected them because their advocates 'are so much obsessed with . . . asserting *a priori* that land is the determining kind of feudal property, that they neglect the significance of mobile four-footed property'.

Russian, and Turkish feudalism, could have accommodated the notion of a 'nomadic feudalism' with the social order that Khazanov describes.[20]

The orthodox Soviet Marxist understanding of feudalism stressed the central importance of the control of landed property for the feudal ruling class.[21] It follows, therefore, that Mongolia could not be considered feudal at a time before fixed areas of land were allocated to individual aristocrats.[22] However, as Gledhill points out, a Weberian understanding of feudalism need not necessarily include rights over land at all. The key criteria he identifies are that 'rights to exercise authority are delegated from higher to lower-ranking power holders in return for services of a military or administrative character through a contractual relationship between lord and vassal'.[23] This certainly appears to be a fair description of the Chinggisid political order, indeed it seems to have been the basis of the relationship between the ruler and nobility of the ancient Hsiung-nu polity,[24] and of the nobles and their khans of the pre-Chinggisid period.[25] However, there is a further difficulty with the Marxist interpretation. In a pastoral society, production requires not only land but also livestock. Whatever the explanatory power of the notion of the 'means of production', we should recognize that for pastoralists it includes both land and livestock. Indeed although herds require pasture and water to survive, it is the animals themselves that produce the valuable products that provide the

[20] See Weber (1923: 61). Indeed, Khazanov's analysis of post-Chinggisid Mongolian society also bears some resemblance to oriental despotism, although without the hydraulic causality of Wittfogel. Even Marx, however, did not define feudal classes solely in terms of their relation to resources; he writes, 'feudal organization was, just as much as the ancient communal ownership, an association against a subjected producing class'. He notes that feudalism developed from conquest and the 'Germanic military constitution'. He concedes that 'Labour is here again the chief thing, power *over* individuals.' Thus, even for Marx, it was not simply their relation to key resources that characterized the ruling class, but their coercive power over people. See Marx (1964: 125–7).

[21] See Vainshtein (1980: 233–4). In this section Vainshtein also discusses the stress various Russian authors have placed on livestock as a basis for the position of the ruling class.

[22] See Humphrey (1980: 19–21).

[23] Gledhill (1994: 55). This raises the question as to whether the power of the khan over the aristocrats was absolute (as in oriental despotism), or entailed obligations on both sides (as in feudalism). Certainly the relationship between vassal and the Kereid khan, To'oril seems to have been contractual in this way. *The Secret History of the Mongols* records what the khan says he will do in return for Temujin's fealty and tribute. In the Chinggisid period we see growing the absolute power of the khan, but the historical sources give ample evidence for the autonomous impulses of the Mongolian aristocracy, who (traditionally) tended to consider their fiefs to be their own petty domains and resented interference by the emperor. See Mote (1994: 662); Ch'i-ch'ing (1994: 521).

[24] The *Shih chi* states that the Hsiung-nu were ruled by an aristocracy composed of three families, and the *shan-yu* (emperor) commanded a number of high officials, with positions that were hereditary and defined in terms of the military force they provided. Of these leaders 'the more important ones commanded ten thousand horsemen and the lesser ones several thousand, numbering twenty-four leaders in all, although all are known by the title of "ten thousand horsemen"': *Shih chi* cited in Barfield (1981: 48).

[25] The relationship between Temujin (Chinggis) and To'oril Khan of the Kereid seems to be of this sort. When other nobles first swore fealty to Chinggis before he became khan, their speeches include elaborate pledges of military support; see Onon (1990: 46).

pastoralist with his or her livelihood. It is the livestock, then, that are the most immediately vital means of production with respect to subsistence.

In Marxist terms it would seem that the social stratum that owns vast herds of animals does have a distinctive relationship to the means of production; however, in my view this was not the defining characteristic of the Mongolian aristocracy. The élite had a political definition (noble genealogy) and the economic expression of this was the vast herds that they owned. The tendency for pastoralism to generate dependent relations provided the economic underpinnings of hierarchy, but we cannot assume that this tendency alone generated the political order. It is possible that at some distant point in prehistory a pastoral élite emerged by accumulating herd-wealth and dependents in this way, but there seems little need to speculate about this, as we have historical documents from the third century BC that describe a pastoral nobility ruling the Mongolian steppes. Once established, however, the steppe élites were subject to what Pareto would have described as a 'circulation of élites', and as a social stratum they were maintained by the economic relations of pastoral dependency described earlier.

Khazanov noted the frequent presence in nomadic societies throughout history of 'slaves and other dependent and exploited groups' and states that 'a nomadic aristocracy derives the greatest benefit, both from the property and social points of view, from the presence of these dependent groups. Members of the aristocracy act as their protectors, patrons etc.'.[26] However, as he considers nomadic societies in general to tend towards egalitarianism, Khazanov implies that this was sufficient to make the society stratified only in some 'fairly rare cases'.[27] In the Mongolian case the society had certainly become stratified into nobles and commoners well before the time of Chinggis Khan, and these were hereditary statuses. Indeed, as an aristocracy is a social strata, a society with a hereditary nobility is necessarily stratified.

The key economic relationship in this model is that of herd placing (*süreg tabih*) or something like it,[28] because there is virtually no limit to the ownership of livestock that can be concentrated in this way, and this provides a means by which an élite can maintain both their wealth and the relations of pastoral dependency that support their political position, as Khazanov recognized. The question as to whether these sort of arrangements (by which livestock are herded for the owners by other households) requires something like the state to enforce it is an interesting one, but seems to be answered by historical sources. *The Secret History of the Mongols* suggests that nobles had livestock herded for them under something like *süreg* arrangements before the

[26] Khazanov (1983: 159).

[27] Ibid. 162.

[28] Tolstov, writing in the 1930s, also considered this sort of leasing relation to be the basis for feudalism, although on more orthodox Marxist grounds. See Vainshtein (1980: 233).

foundation of the Chinggisid state.[29] Furthermore some, such as Clastres, argue that the state requires pre-existent classes.[30] This does appear to have been the case in pre-Chinggisid Mongolia, where there was a clear distinction between nobles and commoners before the emergence of the thirteenth-century imperial polity (which might be properly called a state). However, I am not convinced that relations between the social classes were starkly antagonistic, as Clastres suggests. Indeed, I find it much more likely that there were links of pastoral dependency of the sort modelled above. Paternalism both mitigated and provided ideological justification for the relations of dependency.

It is interesting to note that the relations between commoners and aristocrats did not generally include actual kin ties, which would have implied powerful obligations of a more symmetrical form. As was explored in Ch. 7, kinship was constructed so that noble 'white' lineages were contrasted to the 'black bone' commoners. Through strategic marriage[31] and genealogy, the pastoral aristocracy retained their distinctive elevation and reduced or eliminated kin relations with regard to the mass of their subjects. (The husbands of noblewomen, when they were not 'white bone' themselves, gained a special noble title, but descent remained patrilineal.[32])

But this is not simply to argue, as a Marxist might, that the nature of rights to resources —the relations of production— engendered three basic status categories, and that these underpinned the political system. For the Marxist it might be self-evident that the relations of production should give rise to the political superstructure; but even if this were true, the mechanism by which this occurred —ideology— demands its own analysis. On the other hand, a Weberian interest in ideological and ethical systems allows one to search for their reflection in the structure of economic relations. This sort of approach does provide further insights.

[29] The source describes early ancestors of Chinggis Khan who plundered a group of pastoralists (who had no nobles) and so 'came into livestock, property and people for servants'. Later, in Chinggis Khan's own time, there is mention of a noble or rich man's herdsman bringing him milk. This suggests that the elite owned livestock (possibly captured in war) which was herded for them by dependents who provided them with animal produce. See Onon (1990: 8, 75). Khazanov (1983: 158) contends that nomads are not capable of state formation through the 'internal development' of nomadic society but only as a result of incorporation of sedentary society; but he admits that once there is such a structure 'property-inequality amongst nomads frequently acquires particularly marked dimensions'. Although one may sensibly argue that the pre-Chinggisid Mongolian polities were not states, there is ample evidence in *The Secret History of the Mongols* to suggest a stratified society with feudal relations (in the Weberian sense) between rulers and vassals.

[30] Pierre Clastres (1977: 173) argues, 'It is said that the state is the instrument that allows the ruling class to bring its violent domination to bear on the dominated classes. Let us assume that to be true. For the state to appear, then, there would have to exist a prior division of societies into antagonistic social classes tied to one another by relations of exploitation.'

[31] Nobles betrothed their children at an early age (as with Temujin) and clearly chose marriage-partners for strategic reasons— see Dei Sechen's speech to this effect, Cleaves (1982: 15–16).

[32] This was *kürgen* in Chinggisid times, and later *tabunang*. See Jagchid and Hyer (1979: 272).

The form of the feudal state mirrored a model of human organization found in everyday Mongolian life: the asymmetry of pastoral roles in the domestic unit, and its extension to encompass poor dependents. One Mongolian term for feudal society was *ejen bool niigem*[33] (literally 'master—serf society') and uses the same term, *ejen*, which is used to describe the head of a household; indeed the Manchu emperor himself was known as the *Ejen* Khan. Apart from the intrinsic sense this made in a society with rather few alternative models of organizational form, it was an intuitively viable political form for an élite who were in the position of lords and patrons themselves. The notions of patriarchal authority that remain, even today, part of family structure and pastoral relations, were also intrinsic components of the patrimonialism of the feudal polity.[34]

This explanation provides a rationale for the obligation of labour owed to the feudal lord, rather than a simple system of rent paid in produce. The nobility, being conceived of (ideally) as owning a large number of animals which needed herding, required the loyalty, deference, and, above all, the labour of their subjects, not just their produce.

Ideology and Hierarchy

The development of Inner Mongolian society over time does not support a rigidly economic deterministic explanation. Ideology[35] can be seen to have had an independence from economic and political forms in recent Inner Mongolian history. As seen in Chs. 6, 7, and 8, certain pre-revolutionary models of family structure, social organization, and religious observance had not been lost during three decades of collectivization and socialist education. Since the decollectivization of the 1980s these norms have been expressed in working practice once more; re-emerging to structure economic and social organization. It is clear from this that, in the short term at least, systems of meaning not only have a certain independence from the formal political and economic spheres, but are able to affect their form in fundamental ways.

It must be added that the constraints of private ownership, inheritance, and the lack of redistributive mechanisms are also products of a cultural system which had survived collectivization. The Mongolian concept of social order denoted by the use of the term *ejen* (master), is an important part of this

[33] Written *ezen bogol yn neigem* in the classical script.

[34] By Weber's scheme patrimonialism usually arises as a result of the routinization of charisma, but he notes, 'Patrimonialism can also develop from pure patriarchalism through the disintegration of the patriarchal master's strict authority' (Weber, 1948: 297). I do not, however, find it necessary to adopt all of Weber's general theories regarding the origin of authority, but it is useful to utilize his vocabulary.

[35] I am not using this term in the narrow Marxian sense. My notion of ideology accords with Dumont's (1980: 263) description of it as a 'social set of ideas and values'.

traditional system for the allocation of authority. Weber used the word 'patriarchalism' as a general term for such a model.[36]

> Patriarchalism means the authority of the father, the husband, the senior of the house, the sib elder over the members of the household and sib; the rule of the master and patron over bondsmen, serfs, freed men; of the lord over the domestic servants and household officials; of the prince over house –and court– officials, nobles of office, clients, vassals; of the patrimonial lord and sovereign prince over the 'subjects'.[37]

Weber's patriarchalism, then, is the ideological reasoning utilized in all the above relationships, and in this case it appears particularly well suited to describe the authority of the *ejen* household head and patron as well as that which supported the feudal lord.[38] Such a definition is too general and inclusive to be of much use in describing the particular characteristics of traditional Mongolian concepts of authority; but if we use Weber's term as a shorthand to describe these notions, then we can add patriarchalism to our list of constraints as an *ideological* precondition for the stable pastoral hierarchy of the past, just as Weber considered Protestantism to be a precondition for capitalism.[39] In both feudal and communist epochs the political structure was fundamental to the form that pastoralism took in Inner Mongolia. In the feudal case the political order reflected the values and forms of indigenous pastoral social organization; in the communist era the political structure was derived from alien traditions of Soviet, Chinese, and Marxist thought. However, it seems that what were retained were essential, small-scale, elements of social organization (expandable household-based familial institutions managed by the *ejen*), alongside associated elements of ideology and symbolic logic.

In short, a set of entirely pastoral constraints can be seen to generate certain relations of dependency, which were based on traditional notions of authority we can term 'patriarchal'. Under certain historical circumstances the political form became a 'feudal' one, formalizing and elaborating the basic structure. The question remains as to why the constraints listed were present in Mongolia. Some other pastoral societies have effective redistributive mechanisms that reduce the concentration of animals in the hands of a few: why were these not present in this case?[40]

[36] It has also been used by Tolybekov in his discussion of Mongolian feudalism. See Gellner (1988*b*: 111–15).

[37] Weber (1948: 296).

[38] Aberle's (1962: 35–6) description of pre-revolutionary Chahar society seems to fit Weber's use of the term 'patriarchalism' very well. He writes, 'Official and personal affairs of the *amban* (official) were not fully segregated, and a kinship ideology permeated the dealings of the *amban* with his people . . . The *amban* was a "father" to his people.'

[39] Although there was comparatively little Chinese influence in the pastoral areas where I worked, the centuries of contact between Mongolian and Chinese cultures make it probable that Confucianism, with its strong notions of patriarchal authority, has had some influence upon traditional Mongolian concepts.

[40] Societies such as the Boran, described by Dahl and Hjort (1976), and the several African societies discussed by Burnham (1979).

A full discussion of these questions lies beyond the scope of this monograph, and as Asad has pointed out, it is problematic to try to formulate general rules about all societies termed 'pastoral nomadic'.[41] However, it may be interesting to discuss briefly the implications of the model presented above for the history of Inner Asia. The answer as to why something like feudalism arose in Mongolia may lie with the nature of its relations with neighbouring states. China has had documented relations with the nomadic pastoralists on its northern border for almost as long as historical records have been kept. Steppe societies in this region have long been able to trade their pastoral surplus for agricultural and urban products. This may be one of the conditions that undermine redistributive institutions, because if a surplus were generated it might be traded. (Without the opportunity to exchange their surplus animals, pastoralists without recourse to an external market may find it more socially advantageous to redistribute products they cannot personally consume.) Furthermore, as Mary Helms points out, the resultant trade goods can be particularly important to élites as status markers. She notes 'the identification by élites of natural or crafted "gifts" or "trade goods" from afar as power-associated or power-charged treasures acquired from extraordinary realms outside their own heartland'.[42] This makes it more plausible to imagine an early steppe culture in which élites marked themselves out by means of foreign trade goods. The discovery of Chinese silk in some of the earliest steppe burials provides evidence for the importance of such foreign items to ancient pastoral élites.[43]

Another influence of this sort may be the ability of a powerful redistributive ruler to threaten and wage war on China, so as to extract valuable sedentary goods. This reformulation of the 'trade or raid' thesis is developed by Barfield,[44] who emphasizes the advantages to pastoralists of a large political formation that could gain favourable terms of trade with the Chinese state. These political arguments are convincing as explanations of the large polities created by steppe societies. My only addition is to emphasize the importance of the indigenous pastoral élite and their interests, rather than to suppose a general egalitarianism among nomadic subjects.

It is clear that there can be advantages for the nomadic élite in having an overlord who could co-ordinate the dealings between the pastoralists and the Chinese state. The gains to be had from organizing raids and invasions, for

[41] Talal Asad (1979: 419–25) argues that pastoral nomads should not be viewed without reference to sedentary societies and states. Pastoralists are part of a 'total system' that includes agricultural and pastoral sectors, Asad argues, and as such can be seen as a 'class' in this total system, just as peasants can. Although many of his points are important, I think that Asad's depiction of pastoralists as a class is misleading. Peasants are usually (some would say always) part of a state or centralized polity which includes urban centres, other economic specialists, and a ruling stratum. Pastoral nomads have often been outside the control of such urban-centred states, had usually their own ruling strata, and in many cases have formed their own polities.

[42] Helms (1988: 121).

[43] See Polosmak (1994: 99).

[44] See Barfield (1989).

example, could be a powerful incentive to seek a centralized military command. The profits that could be made from the control of trade routes is another motive for local leaders to accept a central ruler. It also placed the pastoralists in a powerful bargaining position in the face of Chinese trade boycotts.[45] Thirdly, there are defensive considerations, which have not generally received much attention. The protection of a powerful overlord was probably the best way of diminishing the threat of military attack by other nomadic or by sedentary neighbours.

A Comparative Case: The Kirghiz of the Afghan Pamirs

Shahrani's study of the Kirghiz is an interesting example of highly comparable developments in another Inner Asian mobile pastoral society. The social organization of the Kirghiz who live in the high altitudes of the Afghan Pamirs could be described as the missing link between clientelistic pastoral dependence and feudalism that is suggested by my model.

The Kirghiz had arrived in the Afghan Pamirs as a relatively egalitarian group of pastoralists. By the time he was writing, in the 1970s, Shahrani found that the overall situation had changed so that a small number of rich herdsmen had come to own most of the animals of the region, and they leased them out to poor families. An analysis of Shahrani's statistics shows that the top 4 per cent of households owned 85 per cent of the sheep and goats in the district and 54 per cent of the yaks. The richest man of the area was the ruler of the Kirghiz, the khan. He alone owned 41 per cent of the sheep and goats in the region. By contrast 68 per cent of households owned no sheep or goats at all.[46] The position of khan was not hereditary, but one of the key criteria in his selection was how rich the candidate was; 'wealth in livestock and other items has been one of the most crucial factors in the effectiveness of a leader's performance and maintenance of influence'.[47] The main function of the position of khan was to maintain internal order, and this was done mainly through 'mediation and persuasion'.

Shahrani writes, 'Because of this tremendous economic power of the Khan, and that of a few other leaders, the traditional egalitarian and rather loosely structured Kirghiz political organisation has gradually given way to an increasingly more centralised, mildly authoritarian and "feudal" structure in which the Khan figures prominently.'[48] Elsewhere he notes, 'This concentration of the ownership of herds in the hands of a few *oey* (household) units has developed over the past thirty years, mostly as a consequence of the ecological constraints prevailing in the area, but also as a result of shrewd observation, keen perception, and manipulation of these factors by successful

[45] As Barfield (ibid. 36–7) notes, these considerations have been important factors in the relations between China and the nomads of the Eurasian steppes since ancient times.
[46] See Shahrani (1979: 176). [47] Ibid. 164. [48] Ibid. 184.

herders.'[49] These ecological constraints meant that 'animal losses are not uniform throughout the Pamirs . . . but are unpredictable and uneven'.[50] The result is that in Shahrani's opinion the leasing of livestock to families in different areas is the most efficient system for managing pastoral capital (livestock), because adverse conditions are unlikely to affect every area and kill too large a proportion of one's total livestock holdings. The effect is that rich herdsmen get richer by leasing out their animals to poorer households.

The relatively recent developments in Kirghiz society described by Shahrani resemble the model I constructed for Mongolian pastoralism. Natural conditions vary so that the more successful households tend to accumulate livestock, whilst some families soon have too few animals for subsistence. The result, in both cases, was that the rich herd-owners gain a number of dependent families who herd their animals for them.

Although Shahrani never uses the term 'patron–client' to describe the dependent relations between Kirghiz rich and poor, it would seem quite appropriate to do so. He writes:

> The existing ties of kinship, friendship, and affinity in many cases have been strengthened through herding arrangements between rich and poor relations, while new ties based on economic interdependence have developed. In other words, when rich herd owner-managers allocate animals to herding *oey* (households) . . . the agnatic segmentary descent principles, uterine relations, affinal ties, and the political support and allegiance of individuals are given thorough consideration. This is true in almost all cases since most of the rich herders are political officeholders . . . The allocation of the number of animals per herding unit, as well as the number of households who receive animals, shows a pattern of concentric circles determined by the herder's relation to the herd owner-manager.

The Kirghiz of the Pamirs sell their surplus to markets in Afghanistan, just as Inner Mongolians have traded with China for centuries. This is an example, then, of a pastoral economy creating a material inequality that has produced something approaching an indigenous 'feudal' form of social organization via clientelistic relations of pastoral dependency. Of course, there is no possibility that any such 'feudal' structure could revive in Inner Mongolia, which is much too fundamentally integrated into the Chinese state; however, it is interesting to note that the development of unequal ownership and complementary social relations may be an autochthonous tendency in some pastoral societies.

Social and Cultural Change

In more than thirty years of revolutionary praxis, the Chinese Communist Party's project was a broadly Marxist one: to replace both the neo-feudal

[49] Ibid. 180. [50] Ibid. 91.

relations of production and the attendant ideology of pastoral Mongolians with those of socialism. In these terms, then, how can we describe the results of the attempt to build socialism?

Marxian anthropologists such as Godelier tend to emphasize the links between the relations of production and the 'ideology' of a given society. Godelier's analysis of the changes in Andean societies that were conquered by the Inca state provides an interesting example of the application of this type of approach. This instance is particularly useful because it describes the effects on ideology of new relations of production imposed upon a society by force, and this has also occurred in Inner Mongolia since the advent of communist power. Among the conquered Andean village communities, 'A new mode of production was established on a regime of forced labour'. Godelier analyses the resultant changes thus:

> The old mode of village production had determined the dominant role of kinship relations within the traditional community, the new mode of village production had both destroyed the dominant role of kinship relations in the new social organization, leaving it with a secondary role . . . and also transferred the dominant role to the new politico-religious relations, which completely overwhelmed the former village and tribal framework.[51]

Godelier goes on to describe the resultant 'ideology of domination':

> It constituted an adequate ideological form for the functioning of a new mode of production and its economic, political and religious proceedings. Thus, it constituted an ideology which corresponded to the conditions of reproduction in the new social and economic formation. Let us point out, and this influences ideological theory, that it *was not a direct* reflection, an immediate transposition of new relations of production, that the former ideology answered the reproduction needs of these relations *best* . . . We can already imagine the difficulties which partisans of a theory which regards ideology as the direct and simple reflection of the economic infrastructure of a society, will encounter.[52]

This Marxian approach attributes a certain amount of independence to the ideological or cognitive domains of a culture. The ideology supported the reproduction of the new relations of production, but was not a direct reflection of them.

Turning to Inner Mongolia, it does appear that the cognitive logic of the culture was intimately linked to the relations of production of that society. The connections are clearly visible in Mongolian culture. First, the status hierarchy is conceived of, and ceremonially and symbolically expressed, in a similar form to that which is used to structure the household, and the economy outside it. The division of authority and labour in households is a central element of the pastoral relations of production as it was in pre-

[51] Godelier (1977*a*: 186–91). [52] Ibid. 192.

revolutionary pastoral society. The relations of production engendered by patron–client relations appear to be connected with certain 'traditional' cultural values that are also manifest in family relations, and in residence patterns. Secondly, the traditional Mongolian conventions for the ownership of animals and their inheritance is another key element of the relations of production. These traditional notions have been realized in the pattern of livestock ownership that has emerged since decollectivization. Thirdly, in the ceremonial relations with spiritual entities a symbolic logic is utilized similar to that used in economic relations. In both cases the entities that control valuable resources were treated as social superiors and drawn into the social network of reciprocal relations through the use of gifts and utilizing the traditional symbolic logic in other ways.

The social change experienced in pastoral Inner Mongolia is particularly interesting, however, because in the collective period many of the traditional forms described above were suppressed. In their place were instituted the collective relations of production and attendant political structures of the People's Communes, and an entire generation of Mongolians grew to adulthood in this new social order.

Cultural languages are not entirely homogeneous. Individuals acquire slightly different cultural repertoires, but they generally share some basic principles and frames. The domestic sphere, with its wealth of symbolic meanings, is the location of basic socialization for every generation. Small wonder if many pre-revolutionary concepts of social order turned out to be more powerful guides to pastoral practice than those originating with the communist state. There is evidence that something similar occurred in other parts of the Chinese state, as Potter noted in his study of Zengbu, a rural Han Chinese district in Guangdong: 'My conclusion is that in spite of three decades of revolutionary efforts at change there has been a remarkable continuity in Zengbu social structure and culture – especially at the deepest structural level – and there has been a flood-tide return of traditional culture and society during the post-Mao period.'[53]

The division between cultural[54] and productive relations is clearly an artificial one; those concepts and institutions concerned with the systematic production and distribution of material goods are heuristically sectioned off from others and termed 'economic'. However, the question remains as to whether, as Marxist analysis contends, the relations that govern material production and distribution have some sort of primary position in structuring social and cultural forms.

[53] Potter (1993: 170).

[54] I use the definition of Gellner (1988*a*: 274), 'culture can be defined as the set of concepts in terms of which a given population acts and thinks. A concept is a shared way of grouping experiences and of acting and reacting, and usually has a name. A culture is a system, and not just a collection of concepts.'

In approaching the question as to which system determines the other—the ideological structure or the productive one—a distinction must be made between long- and short-term time-frames. In the short term it is clear from recent Inner Mongolian history that the cultural process can inform the productive one. When it comes to the independence of elements of ideology over long periods of time the evidence is less conclusive. We will never know what the result of a century of collectivization would have had upon Mongolian culture. But some cultural forms do seem to have been retained over long periods of time, despite changes in productive relations. The symbolic system for ordering domestic space has an extremely long history and is retained in areas that have widely differing economic systems. The Buryat have both sedentary and pastoral populations that share the organization of domestic space (and other common cultural traits, such as *oboo* worship, patriliny, and myths of origin). Furthermore, groups in Inner Mongolia that have farmed for centuries (such as the Horchin and Harchin) have norms regarding the family, domestic space, and spiritual beliefs almost identical to those of pastoral Mongolians. It may be coincidence that the economic systems in each of these cases have supported the common ideological elements, but it would seem unlikely. Considering the resilience that these cultural forms have displayed under collectivization it would seem more likely that they are not simply the product of existent productive relations.

To say that the pre-revolutionary relations of production have been in some way 'carried' in the cultural models for a generation before being reimplemented, however, would be an oversimplification. The reasons for rituals such as the *oboo* ceremony are to be found in the present as much as in the past. As Kipnis points out in his study of rural Han Chinese culture in Shandong, the *koutou* and other traditional rituals that were eliminated in the Cultural Revolution but have now returned 'should not be viewed as "survivals" from the feudal times, but rather as modern, post-GPCR (re)inventions'.[55] Furthermore, in Inner Mongolia many elements of the pre-revolutionary culture, such as the high standing of the Borjigid nobility and the importance of hereditary feudal status, show no sign of being recreated. What has been retained and expressed through the traditional symbolic language is a more fundamental set of concepts for the organization of social life. Two parts of this system that can be given names are the concepts of the *ejen* (master or patron), and of *yos (josu,* manners or rules). These concepts of social order relate to the organization of the household, encampment, small economic groupings, and joint ritual activity.

The importance of symbolic meaning structures is a theme that emerges from the work of Bourdieu. The common cognitive 'system of durable, transposable dispositions'[56] shared by a group or social class is termed the

[55] See Kipnis (1994: 206–7). [56] Bourdieu (1977: 72).

habitus. Although Bourdieu recognizes that the cognitive structures making up the *habitus* are shaped by the relations of domination, and in turn reproduce them, he accords these symbolic meaning structures with a durability and independence that fits well with the Inner Mongolian case. Humphrey describes a comparable situation among the Buryat Mongolians during the Soviet era. She discusses the 'resurrection of traditional groups on the basis of the cognitive structure of the lineage'.[57] However, she implies that the traditional cultural structures satisfied certain human needs and aspirations in a way that Soviet ideology and social practice could not. The survival of such extended kinship structures, then, resulted from the inadequacy of the Soviet system, to which traditional culture could be contrasted. There are some points of comparison with Inner Mongolia where, as the Maoist ideology that accompanied the People's Communes declined, many Mongolians felt able to promote practices considered traditional. But this means that we cannot look for an explanation of the strength of traditional forms in terms of a collectivized present, as Humphrey's study did. It is also difficult to try to explain the situation entirely in terms of a continuing reaction against the assimulationist Maoism of the *past*.

The role of cultural identity seems crucial in explaining the Inner Mongolian and possibly the Buryat experience too. In pre-revolutionary Inner Mongolian rituals, activities and beliefs associated with domestic and group membership were expressed by the symbolic repertoire, which in turn seems to have supported and retained them during the Maoist era. As Skinner points out with respect to linguistics, 'It is true that our social practices help to bestow meaning on our social vocabulary. But it is equally true that our social vocabulary helps to constitute the character of those practices.' It is apparent that the Mongolian symbolic system is not a neutral means of expression (if indeed such a medium is conceivable). Like other vocabularies it not only expresses but influences and modifies the statements conceived and made.[58] The ordering of domestic space helped support cognitive structures that themselves were not expressed in politico-economic practice in the commune period. It not only allocated the *gertiin ejen* a place to sit in the *ger*, but was part of a gendered normative complex that also allocated to him the managerial responsibility for the family's herds. The People's Communes had suppressed the full implementation of this model, but not replaced it.

Although Marxist theory does not deny that there are areas of culture whose content and structure are relatively independent from economic causation, it does assume that cultural models are ideological productions. They

[57] Humphrey (1983: 438).

[58] In some ways this notion of a 'cultural language' resembles Bourdieu's (1977: 72) *habitus* in that it could also be described as 'a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed towards acting as structuring structures'. However, it would be misleading to use the term *habitus*, as my approach does not address the more general social theory that Bourdieu has developed.

are likely to fall away if they clearly contradict the purpose of ideology—the legitimation of the ruling class. But in pastoral Inner Mongolia certain basic cultural systems of meaning, particularly those concerned with the household, have been more durable than the pre-revolutionary ruling class, and bear little relationship to the communist one. They are closely connected to indigenous modes of pastoral organization, however, and the history of these relations provides some of the insights that the Marxist explanations lack: the importance of culturally specific conceptual structures in the process of social change.

APPENDIX.
A PASTORAL HOUSEHOLD BUDGET

Income

Wool (in April and May the family shears its sheep, combs its goats, and sells the wool and cashmere).

	yuan
50 goats each producing 0.25 jin of cashmere, sold at 90 yuan per jin	1,125
150 sheep each producing an average of 3 jin of wool, sold at 3 yuan per jin	1,350
TOTAL	2,475

Livestock (in November the family sells animals to the state trading corporation)

	yuan
15 mature sheep at 90 yuan each	1,350
1 cow at 1,100 yuan	1,100
TOTAL	2,450

Animal skins (the family slaughters about 20 small animals, or the equivalent, for meat throughout the year; the skins from these animals fetch different prices depending on when the animal was killed (the skin and wool being thicker in the winter), and range from 10 to 30 yuan for sheep- and goatskins, and from 40 to 80 yuan for cattle-hides. I have taken an average price as 20 yuan per small animal skin)

	yuan
20 sheep- and goatskins at 20 yuan	400
TOTAL ANNUAL INCOME	5,325

Expenditure

Food and consumer goods

	Quantity	Price (yuan)	Notes
Flour	1,050 kg	630	The ration is 25 jin (12.5 kg) per person per month
Millet	84 kg	42	1 kg per person per month
Tea	36 bricks	288	Identical to the 90 kg consumption reported by Karamisheff (1925)
Salt	126 kg	25.2	Very similar to the rate of consumption Karamisheff gives

	Quantity	Price (yuan)	Notes
Vegetables	210 kg	210	This item was not in Karamisheff's budget
Flavourings	60 kg	120	As above
Biscuits	60 kg	90	As above
Soap	24 kg	72	As above
Medicine	10		As above
Sweets and sugar	60 kg	120	A much higher figure than given by Karamisheff
Alcohol	25 litres	135	This figure is five times the one given by Karamisheff. In some cases it can be much higher: one informant consumed 240 litres a year!
Tobacco	12 kg	48	
TOTAL		1,790.2	This total does not include the cash equivalent of the livestock that the family itself kills and eats, which is about 20 sheep or goats a year, representing a value of 1,800 yuan. It also gives one sheep each year for the *oboo* ceremony and associated games.

Clothing

	No. of years before replacement	Cost per year (yuan)	Notes
Boots (4 adult pairs)	1	480	Same (rapid) rate of consumption as Karamisheff (1925) records
Socks (2 pairs each)	1	28	As above
Shoes (3 children's pairs)	1	60	
Shirts (2 each)	1	70	
Trousers (1 each)	1	70	
Summer robe (1 each for 4 adults and eldest child)	3	116	
Winter robe (1 each for 4 adults and eldest child)	3	333	

	No. of years before replacement	Cost per year (yuan)	Notes
Children's coats (for 2 younger children)	1	60	
Hat (2 men and eldest son)	3	15	
Fur cap (1 each)	3	23	
TOTAL		1,255	

Household utensils

	No. of years before replacement	Cost per year (yuan)
Cooking pots (2 per *ger* = 4)	10	12
Bowls (20 per *ger* = 40)	10	10
Glasses (10 per *ger* = 20)	10	4
Basins (2 per *ger* = 4)	10	4
Ladles (2 per *ger* = 4)	10	4
Chopsticks (20 pairs per *ger* = 40)	10	4
Thermos flask (2 per *ger* = 4)	3	16
TOTAL		54

Tools and saddlery

	No. of years before replacement	Cost per year (yuan)
Axe (1)	10	2
Knives (3)	5	3
Shovel (1)	5	3
Saddles (2)	5	34
Saddle leathers (2)	5	58.8
Harness (2 sets)	5	20
TOTAL		120.8

Housing and furniture

The figures below are for one *ger*, which is doubled in the expenditure summary in Ch. 6 to account for the two yurts that the model family lives in. I have given the figures for a single *ger* here because it may be more useful to a reader who wishes to compare it with other household data in that form. As Karamisheff (1925) notes, a

ger frame will last about ten years and the felt coverings about three. However, battered and dilapidated yurts are often used by poor families for longer than this before replacement. The wooden frames of the *ger* are still sometimes made by herding families themselves, but the felts seem almost always to be bought.

	No. of years before replacement	Cost per year (yuan)	Notes
Side frames, *hana* (*xan-a*) (4)	10	38	
Door, *üüd* (*egyde*) (1)	10	9	
Roof circle, *toono* (*togunu*) (1)	10	11	
Roof struts, *un'* (*uni*) (64)	10	16	
Felts, *esgii* (*isegei*) (12 at 60 yuan each)	3	360	The relative costs of these items is much higher than in Karamisheff's (1925) budget
Canvas, for covering the *ger* in summer	3	107.7	This item is not essential and poor families do without it
Beds (2)	10	12	
Bedding (4 quilts and mats)	5	30	
Furniture (2 cupboards and 5 small tables)	10	60	
Stove	10	7	This is the cost of a metal stove, but many families use a cheaper brick stove with a metal top
Total (1 *ger*)		650.7 yuan per year	
TOTAL (2 *ger* family)		1,301.4 yuan per year	

Tax

Annual taxes in this district were 1.8 yuan per mature small animal, and 5 yuan for big animals.

	Tax (yuan)
200 sheep and goats (150 mature animals)	270
30 cows and horses	150
TOTAL	420

Transport

	No. of years before replacement	Cost per year (yuan)
Small, wooden cart (for water etc.)	10	50
Large wooden cart (for gers etc.	10	80
TOTAL		130

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